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RAY BONNEVILLE
AT KING ELECTRIC

Reviews

Ray Bonneville
"Simply perfect"

Richard Thompson

"When you grow up on murder
ballads and mining disasters,
it alters you a bit."

penguin eggs

Album of the Year



ML
5
P46
no.80
2018

MUSIC

grace petrie
eric bibb
shakura s'aida
the fretless

Issue No. 80 winter 2018 \$5.99



0 61399 73060 2

04

yves lambert



Escape the Ordinary



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April 3

DAVID FRANCEY
April 11

**COLLEEN BROWN sings
THE JONI MITCHELL
SONGBOOK**
April 13

RUTHIE FOSTER
May

SOLD OUT

MUSIC • COMEDY/THEATRE

Cover Story

48 Yves Lambert

The grand old man of Québécois traditional music tames his demons and celebrates with a new disc full of carnal temptations, errant chickens, angry farmers, and dodgy priests.

Features

20 Albums of the Year

Jason & Pharis Romero topped our Album of the Year poll with their thrilling *Sweet Old Religion*. Wallis Bird and Annie Sumi were voted our critics' favourite New Discoveries.

28 The Fretless

Classical music meets the world of the Anglo-Celts.

30 Rachel Aucion & Sabin Jacques

This exceptional Québécois duo pay tribute to the late great accordionist Philippe Bruneau (1934-2011).

32 Dave Harris

British Columbia's most prominent busker recounts a career cultivated by his head, hands, and feet.

36 Eric Bibb

His latest, beautiful, eclectic recording explores the African roots underlying America's folk and blues traditions.

38 Shakura S'Aida

Actress and multiple award-winning chanteuse sings every shade of the blues and then some.

40 John Wort Hannam

He rediscovered the joy of making music thanks to the Americana maverick Kevin Welch.

42 Folk Alliance International

Montreal hosts the 30th birthday bash for the biggest folk music gathering on the planet.

44 Braden Gates

With keen observations and greasy fiddle, his mature, latest album is full of weird influences.

46 The Al Purdy Project

The legacy of the late Canadian poet is celebrated on a documentary and new recording that includes contributions from Leonard Cohen and Gord Downie.

34 Grace Petrie

An LGBTQ+ activist and folksinging socialist who is the living proof that the art of protest is still in rude health.



DAVE McEATHRON

"Extremely skilled with a turn of phrase... everything about this project is authentic, relatable and real."

~ TANYA CORBIN, PENGUIN EGGS MAGAZINE

Toronto-Hamilton based multi-instrumentalist Dave McEathron is thrilled to announce his resurgence into the music scene with the release of his full-length folk album titled *Abandoned Companions* along with a roots rock EP titled *The Abandoned Companions Companion Piece*.



As the principal songwriter and frontman of the former roots rock band The Warped 45s, McEathron has been praised for his passionate storytelling. Described as 'one of our most evocative lyricists' by Exclaim!

Utilizing his crafting skills, Dave has made every album cover with high-quality pieces of leather and has hand stamped each one with the album's logo. Inside fans will enjoy both the full-length folk

album along with the roots-rock EP and a complete song book filled with lyrics and chords to every song.

Dave worked alongside producer Brian Pickett (sometime collaborator with The Strumbellas, Ashley Condon) The album also includes Luck, a song which was co-written with JUNO award-winner David Francey. Dave's acclaimed lyrical skills shine through on each tune. The songs are concise, and although stand steadily on their own, they systematically build an overall arch that is the entire album and Dave's life. Best enjoyed during life's quiet moments.

DaveMcEathron.com

FACTOR
THE FOUNDATION ASSISTING CANADIAN TALENT ON RECORDINGS
WITH SUPPORT FROM CANADA'S PRIVATE RADIO BROADCASTERS

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Regular Content

6 Charts

The best-selling recordings in a variety of national stores, plus the most-played albums on key Canadian radio stations.

8 Editorial

Roddy Campbell insists it's time to rediscover the great musicians from the past.

9 Long Player

The Record That Changed My Life: Annie Sumi tips her hat to Joni Mitchell's *Songs For a Seagull*.

10 Swansongs

Penguin Eggs pays tribute to Otis Rush, Ned Landry, Martin Allcock, and Roy Clark.

12 Introducing

John Craigie, Joe Nolan, The Kubasonics, Early Spirit, Robert Connely Farr.

19 CFMAs

All the winners from the 2018 Canadian Folk Music Awards annual celebration.

52 Richard Thompson

The Penguin Eggs Interview: Colin Irwin has a natter with a bona fide folk-rock legend.

57 Reviews

Breabach, *The Frenzy of the Meeting* "Balanced. Seamless. Brilliant."

67 En français

Rachel Aucoin & Sabin Jaques, Joe Nolan

70 A Point of View

Tim Readman demands etiquette at gigs or else...

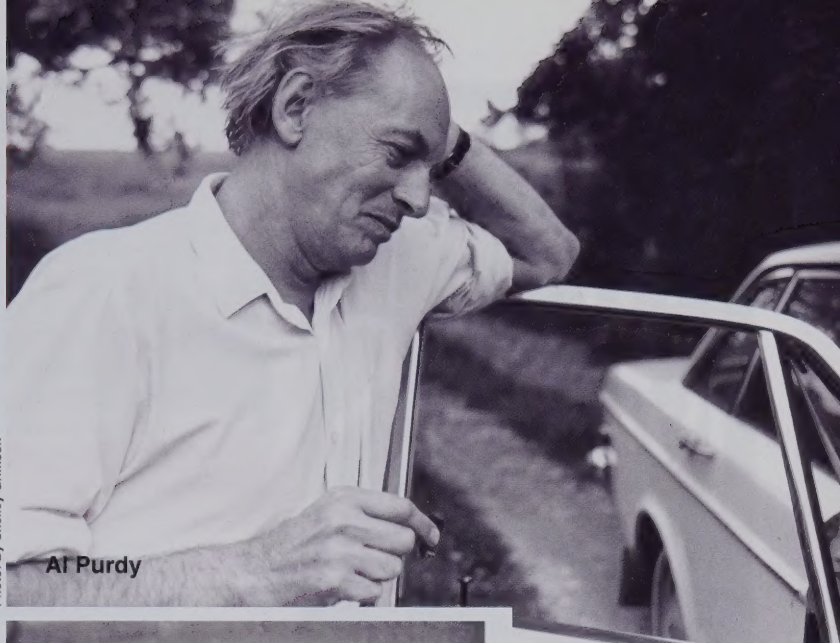
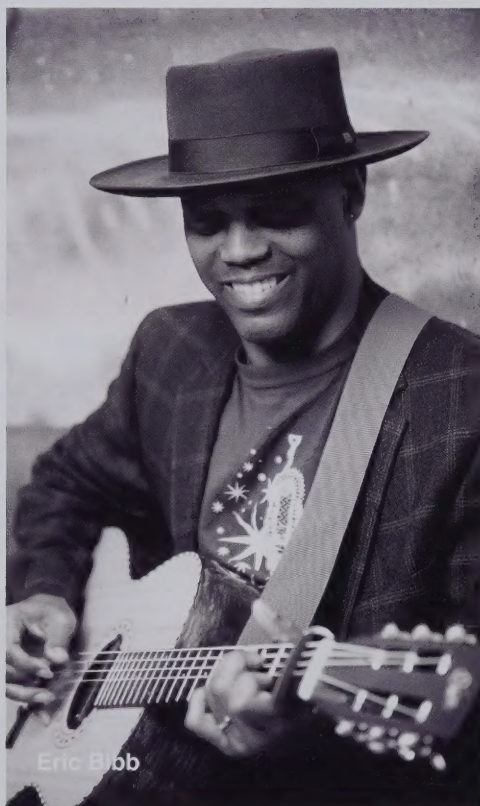


Photo: By Shelley Grimson

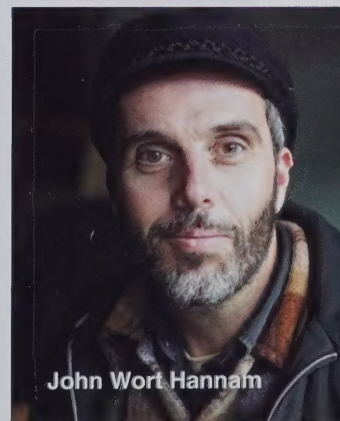
Al Purdy



Eric Bobb



Braden Gates



John Wort Hannam



Album of the Year: Pharis & Jason Romero



Rachel Aucoin & Sabin Jaques

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SONIC RECORDS MATTMAYS.COM FACTOR

stingray radio

1. **The Fugitives**
The Promise Of Strangers (Borealis)
2. **Rob Lutes**
Walk in the Dark (Lucky Bear Records)
3. **El Coyote**
El Coyote (Independent)
4. **Pharis & Jason Romero**
Sweet Old Religion (Lula Records)
5. **Rose-Erin Stokes**
Wherever I Go (Independent)
6. **Chris Ronald**
Fragments (Independent)
7. **Oliver The Crow**
Oliver The Crow (Independent)
8. **The Andrew Collins Trio**
Tongue (Independent)
9. **David Francey**
The Broken Heart Of Everything (Laker Music)
10. **True North**
Open Road, Broken Heart (Independent)

The most-played folk and roots discs played nationally by Stingray Music throughout August, September and October, 2018.

fred's

1. **Rum Ragged**
Rum Ragged (Independent)
2. **The Once**
Time Enough (Borealis)
3. **The Ennis Sisters**
Keeping Time (Independent)
4. **The Irish Descendents**
Is Your Rhubarb Up (Independent)
5. **Shanneyganock**
Home In The Harbour (Independent)

Based on album sales for August, September and October, 2018, at Freds Records, 198 Duckworth Street, St. John's, NL, 1C 1G5



Rosanne Cash

grace petrie's ten of the best



Grace Petrie

Billy Bragg and Wilco
Mermaid Avenue (Nonesuch)

Bob Dylan
Blood on the Tracks (Columbia)

Bruce Springsteen
Wrecking Ball (Columbia)

Case/Lang/Viers
Case/Lang/Viers (Anti/Epitaph)

Joni Mitchell -
Blues (Reprise)

Martyn Joseph
Songs for the Coming Home (Pipe Records)

Mary Gauthier
Rifles and Rosemary Beads (Proper Records)

Nancy Kerr
Instar (Little Dish Records)

Tracy Chapman
Tracy Chapman (Elektra Records)

Various Artists
Songs of Separation (Navigator Records)

Grace Petrie's new recording is *Queer As Folk*. Our feature on Grace runs on page 34.

blackbyrd

1. **Joe Nolan**
Cry baby (Independent)
2. **Dan Mangan**
More or Less (Arts & Crafts)
3. **Rosanne Cash**
She Remembers Everything (Blue Note)
4. **Charles Bradley**
Black Velvet (Daptone)
5. **Bob Dylan**
More Blood, More Tracks (Columbia)
6. **Cat Power**
Wanderer (Domino)
7. **Dur-Dur Band**
Volumes 1 & 2 (Analog Africa)
8. **Blaze**
Original Cast Recording (Light In The Attic)
9. **Richard Thompson**
13 Rivers (New West)
10. **Charles Lloyd & Lucinda Williams**
Vanished Garden (Blue Note)

Based on album sales for Aug., Sept., and Oct., 2018, at Blackbyrd Myozik, 10442-82 Ave., Edmonton, AB, T6E 2A2 and at 1126-17 Ave., SW, Calgary, AB, T2T 0B4

highlife

1. **Charles Lloyd & Lucinda Williams**
Vanished Garden (Blue Note)
2. **Alanis Obomsawin**
Bush Lady (Constellation)
3. **Melissa Laveaux**
Radjo Siwel (No Format)
4. **Angelique Kidjo**
Remain In Light (Kravencore)
5. **Peggy Lee**
Echo Painting (Songlines)
6. **Buffy Sainte-Marie**
'Medicine Songs (True North)
7. **Sons of Kemet**
Your Queen is a Reptile (Impulse)
8. **Aram Bajakian's Kef**
Aram Bajakian's Kef (Tzadik Records)
9. **Orquesta Akokan**
Orquesta Akokan (Daptone)
10. **Richard Thompson**
13 Rivers (New West)

Based on album sales for August, September and October, 2018, at Highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC, V5L 3X5



backstreet

1. **Jeremy Dutcher**
Woloastoquiyuk Lintuwakonawa (Independent)
2. **Matt Mays**
Twice Upon a Hell of a Time (Sonic)
3. **Erin Costello**
Sweet Marie (Venue)
4. **Anna & Elizabeth**
The Invisible Comes To Us (Smithsonian Folkways)
5. **Will Oldham**
Songs Of Love And Horror (Drag City)
6. **John Prine**
The Tree of Forgiveness (Oh Boy)
7. **Hyprochondriacs**
In 3/4 (Independent)
8. **The Olympic Symphonum**
Beauty In The Tension (Forward)
9. **Boz Scaggs**
Out Of The Blues (Concord)
10. **The Tortoise The Hare & The Millionaire**
The Tortoise The Hare & The Millionaire (She Said Feck)

Based on album sales for August, September and October, 2018, at Backstreet Records, at their Saint John and Fredricton, NB, stores.

soundscapes

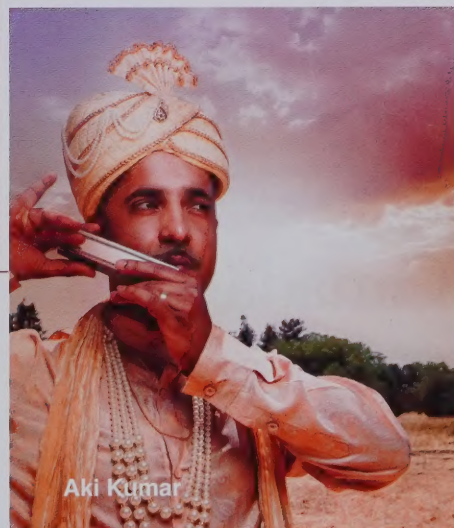
1. **Charles Lloyd & Lucinda Williams**
Vanished Garden (Blue Note)
2. **Cat Power**
Wanderer (Domino)
3. **Bob Dylan**
Live 1962-66: The Copyright Recordings (Columbia)
4. **The Band**
Music From Big Pink 50th Anniversary (Capitol)
5. **Paul Simon**
In The Blue Light (SMG)
6. **Neko Case**
Hell-On (Anti)
7. **Jeremy Dutcher**
Woloastoquiyuk Lintuwakonawa (Independent)
8. **Richard Thompson**
13 Rivers (New West)
9. **Alejandro Escovedo**
The Crossing (Yep Roc)
10. **Sandro Perri**
In Another Life (Constellation)

Based on album sales for August, September and October, 2018, at Soundscapes, 572 College Street, Toronto, On, M6G 1B3

ckua radio

1. **Great Lake Swimmers**
The Waves (Nettwerk)
2. **Joe Nolan**
Cry Baby (Independent)
3. **John Wort Hannam**
Acres of Elbow Room (Black Hen)
4. **Madeleine Peyroux**
Anthem (Decca)
5. **Colin James -**
Miles To Go (True North)
6. **Amy Van Keeken**
In Dreams (Scorpio 76)
7. **River Whyless**
Kindness, A Rebel (Roll Call)
8. **Amy Helm**
This Too Shall Light (Yep Roc)
9. **Kat Danser**
Goin' Gone (Black Hen)
10. **Richard Thompson**
13 Rivers (New West)
11. **Braden Gates**
Pictures of Us (Borealis)
12. **Aki Kumar**
Hindi Man Blues (Independent)
13. **Boz Scaggs**
Out Of The Blues (Concord)
14. **Mariel Buckley**
Driving In The Dark (Independent)
15. **T. Buckley**
Miles We Put Behind (Independent)
16. **Iron & Wine**
Weed Garden (Sub Pop)
17. **Fatoumata Diawara**
Fenfo (Montuno)
18. **Roxanne Potvin**
All It Was (Comino)
19. **Mike Farris**
Silver & Stone (Compass)
20. **Eliza Gilkyson**
Secularia (Compass)

The most-played folk, roots and world music discs on CKUA radio - www.ckua.org - throughout August, September and October, 2018.



10 years ago

1. **Calexico**
Carried To Dust (Quarterstick)
2. **Maria Muldaur**
Yes We Can! (Telarc)
3. **Serena Ryder**
Pretty World (Sam Baker)
4. **Rodney Crowell**
Sex and Gasoline (Stony Plain Records)
5. **Ron Sexsmith**
Exit Strategy For The Soul (Warners)
6. **Wendy McNeill**
A Dreamers Guide To Hardcore Living (Six Shooter)
7. **Loreena McKennitt**
A Midwinter Night (Quinlan Road)
8. **Michael Franti And Spearhead**
All Rebel Rockers (Anti)
9. **Lucinda Williams**
Little Honey (Lost Highway)
10. **Maria Dunn**
The Peddler (Distant Whisper)

Based on album charts from Penguin Eggs issue No. 40, published in December, 2008.



penguin eggs

The Folk, Roots and World Music Magazine

Issue No. 80, Winter, 2018

Issn: 73060205

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Penguin Eggs welcomes news, features and photos, but cannot accept responsibility for any unsolicited material. Please check with the editor prior to submitting any articles or artwork. We publish four times a year: Summer (June), Autumn (September), Winter (December) and Spring (March).

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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones's wonderful album *Penguin Eggs* — a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for such diverse artists as Bob Dylan, Warren Zevon and Kate Rusby.

Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982 and has never fully recovered. In 2012, however, he finally made an emotional comeback, performing at several events throughout the summer. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes *Penguin Eggs* such an outrageously fine recording. It's available through Topic Records. This magazine strives to reiterate its spirit.

Penguin Eggs magazine is published and printed in Canada and acknowledges the generous financial support from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. We also acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through Canada Heritage and the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) distributed through the Canada Council for the Arts.

Canada



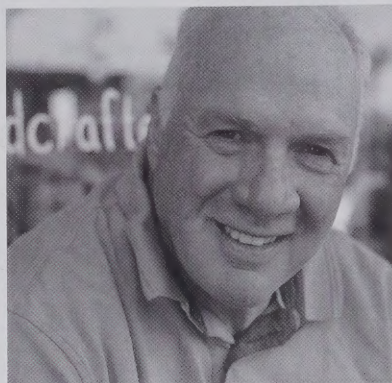
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Editorial



I had a basic knowledge of fiddler Ned Landry's accomplishments before writing his obituary for this issue but never fully understood the depth of his colourful career. A contemporary of the storied old-time fiddler Don Messer, Landry wrote hundreds of tunes throughout his life, performed weekly on one of the most popular television shows in Canada in the '60s, frequently toured the country, earned the Order of Canada, but died in relative musical obscurity.

Sadly, just as we were about to go to press, news arrived from Cape Breton about the passing of Carl MacKenzie at age 80. By all accounts, he was one of the great fiddlers from that region. And I also know next to nothing about him.

What struck me about Landry's death was how few personal accounts of his achievements remain. I started to think: how many more wonderful, veteran Canadian musicians are still out there, their public appearances now greatly diminished through lack of interest or awareness? So I made some inquiries.

My friend Jean Hewson—a marvelous traditional singer from Newfoundland—immediately tracked down 98-year-old award-winning fiddler Matilda Murdoch to a seniors' home in Chatham, NB. Murdoch still plays and remains as sharp as a tack.

This magazine was founded to document such talent but, much to my regret, it's an intention sorely

neglected.

So why do we tend to forget these incredible Canadian musicians from the past? Why do we allow them to wither in obscurity? Their legacy is far too important to fade with age.

While it's no excuse, I find it difficult not to focus on current and emerging talent. I revel in discovering something new, original, and exciting. Innovation keeps folk music fresh, stimulating, and relevant but the raw emotion of an unaccompanied traditional singer, piper, or fiddler... still stirs emotions in me that leaves others puzzled.

But when was the last time you experienced any of the above solo in concert? Without an idiosyncratic interest, it's a struggle to uncover this country's rich but eclipsed musical heritage. It's much easier to book artists with name recognition.

Outside of Quebec, what compounds the problem is a distinct lack of interest in the masters from the past. Most young musicians want to write their own tunes. Understandable. But think of the skills gained and reputations enhanced recording a homage to the late Buddy MacMaster, or Al Cherney, or Emile Benoit...

Possibly, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Rachel Aucoin and Sabin Jacques, featured in this issue, have just released a tribute album honouring renowned Quebec accordionist Philippe Bruneau. Recorded with distinct flair and impeccable taste, hopefully it leads others down a similar path.

In future issues *Penguin Eggs* will do its bit, too. Look for an upcoming interview with Matilda Murdoch and any other venerable musician we rediscover. And I'm willing to wager my weekly pocket money that if we collectively generate enough interest in the traditions of old, the links in the chain that tie us to the future will remain resolute.

Roddy Campbell

The Record That Changed My Life



Annie Sumi: she discovered Joni Mitchell in a strange shop in Barrie, ON, and ended up dancing with pirates, swimming with dolphins and speaking with seagulls.

On weekends, my father would pick me up from high school parties and we would sing along to the likes of Elton John, Freddie Mercury, Supertramp, and David Bowie. Their songs were the soundtrack of his formative years, and I understood that they were connected to some of his fondest memories. After repeating that playlist over and over, my ears went wandering in search of the songs that would come with me through moments in my life; the songs that could send me through time.

Often, feeling like a lonesome, old soul, I would go searching through thrift stores, making up stories for the trinkets and treasures that lived there. On one particularly aimless quest, I found myself at the Antique Centre in Barrie, ON. It was like walking through the doors of my imagination... There were cuckoo clocks that hugged the ceiling like crown moulding, little figurines with parachutes falling from the sky, porcelain children, ancient china, and enough books to fill a library!

My hands fell gently upon the artifacts and carpets as I made my way through the corridors. Sauntering through human history, I came across a sign that said "Music Upstairs". There was an ironic silence in that room full of music. I let my fingers flip through the crates of old records, passing by *Graceland*, *Harvest Moon*, *Tapestry*, and I stopped upon *Song to a Seagull* by Joni Mitchell.

It was in bad condition, dusty and tattered

around the edges, but the artwork caught my eye. With meditative attention, I opened the album to read the lyrics inside, and I was overcome with curiosity, thinking about how these words might form into melody. Without knowing Joni, I plucked her from the bunch and brought her home.

I threw the record onto the turntable and watched it spinning around and around. With particular care, I placed the needle on the outer rim and listened attentively to the crackling countdown. Lying on my bed, in the dark, the plucked, nylon strings seemed to walk out of the empty space and fill the room. I thought of her spindly fingers, dancing up and down the neck of the guitar, climbing a ladder of carefully chosen notes.

Suddenly, her voice broke through and shattered me completely—The Record That Changed My Life. The melodies were evocative; they painted pictures that hung on the walls of each word.

Surrendering to my imagination, I willingly followed her front-to-back.

Together, we walked through castles and cities; we learned to dance with pirates and swim with dolphins. By the B Side, we spoke with the seagulls: "*Fly silly seabird/ No dreams can possess you/No voices can blame you/For sun on your wings/My gentle relations/Have names they must call me/For loving the freedom/Of all flying things/My dreams of the seagulls fly/Out of reach out*

of cry" (*Song to a Seagull*).

With all of its whimsy and wonder, I understood the language of her lyrics. They were stories about love and emptiness, and, within the mystery of the words, there was an undeniable truth: freedom. Her melodies could fly, and her lyrics revealed that she was a woman of wild-her-ness. Listening with deep heart, I could feel the experiences of my childhood and the uncertainties of my existence being woven together to form the tapestry of my life.

When the final song came to an end, I was left "full and hollow". I inhaled the following silence and broke the stillness with a sigh. Laying there, emotionally paralyzed, I noticed the streams of tears that had salted my cheek. For 38 minutes and seven seconds, I was transported to another world—Joni's world. Although, at first, I did not understand the depth of that moment, my loneliness subsided knowing that the wilderness inside of me lived inside her, too. Without hesitation, I turned on the lights, flipped the record, and listened again, following along with every word.

By the time *Cactus Tree* spun around again, I knew that Joni Mitchell would be the one who could send me through time.



SWANSONGS



1934-2018

Otis Rush

Alongside Magic Sam and Buddy Guy, Otis Rush helped define Chicago's highly influential West Side sound, which resonated around the world. His admirers grew to include the likes of Eric Clapton, Duane Allman, and Carlos Santana. Stevie Ray Vaughan named his band after Rush's track *Double Trouble*. Led Zeppelin, The Rolling Stones, and John Mayall & the Bluesbreakers all covered Rush's songs.

"His guitar playing hit heights I didn't think any musician was capable of: notes bent and

twisted so delicately and immaculately," wrote noted critic Robert Palmer in his celebrated book *Deep Blues* (1981), "they seemed to form actual words, phrases that cascaded up the neck, hung suspended over the rhythm and fell suddenly, bunching at the bottom in anguished paroxysms."

Otis Rush was born in Philadelphia, MS, April 29, 1934, the sixth of seven children. His family worked on a sharecropping farm before moving to Chicago in 1948. He sung in church choirs and picked up the rudiments of guitar from his older brothers and from the records of Muddy Waters and John Lee Hooker. As his playing developed, he adopted the approach taken by B.B. and Albert King—high-note

string bending, biting single note lines. He also became inspired by jazz guitarists Kenny Burrell and George Benson. Rush played left-handed with his strings upside down, placing the low E string at the bottom and the high E string on top, so he sounded like no one else. While he paid his rent working in a steel mill and driving a truck, among other jobs, he performed in various clubs on West Roosevelt Avenue as Little Otis.

Gradually, Rush gained the respect of acclaimed composer and bassist Willie Dixon, who helped him secure a contract with Eli Toscano's Cobra Records in 1956. Rush's first single, a cover of Dixon's *I Can't Quit You Baby*, made it to No. 6 on *Billboard's* R&B chart. For the next two years, Rush cut several masterpieces—*Double Trouble*, *My Love Will Never Die*, *Three Times A Fool*, *Keep On Loving Me Baby*, and *All Your Love*—for Cobra.

He introduced slow, gospel-tinged blues sung in minor keys to the blues and was the first to include the electric bass on his recordings. Both Magic Sam and Buddy Guy also signed with Cobra and made further innovations to Chicago's still heavily dependent Delta-orientated blues. As a result, Rush, Guy, and Sam pioneered what became known as Chicago's West Side sound.

Toscano was a heavy gambler, though, and frittered away the artists' royalties, and in 1958 the label went bust. It would become a recurring theme in Rush's life. Whether it was due to bad luck or bad business deals, his recording efforts largely foundered. He followed Dixon to Chess Records in 1960, where he cut one single, the wonderful *So Many Roads, So Many Trains*, before moving on to Duke Records, where his career went into limbo. Typical of Rush's luck was the album *Right Place, Wrong Time* (1971) recorded for Capitol Records. Once completed, the major label passed on it, despite its obvious excellence. Five years later, it was released on the small, independent label Bullfrog Records. Such frustrations led Rush to temporarily retire in the late '70s but he made a comeback in the '80s. He was inducted into the Blues Foundation's Hall of Fame in 1984.

Ultimately, it took until 1994 before his recording career finally found momentum with the critically acclaimed *Ain't Enough Comin' In*—his first studio album in 16 years. He would go on to win a Grammy Award for best traditional blues album, *Any Place I'm Going*, in 1998. A debilitating stroke in 2003 ended his career, however. In 2015, Otis Rush was placed at No. 53 on *Rolling Stone* magazine's list of the 100 Greatest Guitarists.

— Roddy Campbell

Ned Landry

Born 1921

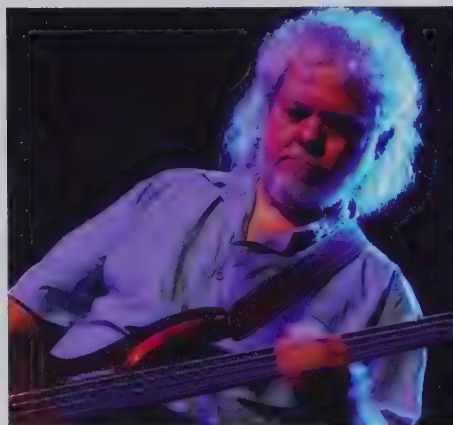
A pioneer of East Coast fiddling and recipient of the Order of Canada, Ned Landry died Aug. 25. He was 97.

Born in Saint John, NB, Feb. 2, 1921, Landry first took to the harmonica. His aunt, Rose Sullivan, however, bought him a fiddle and on it he excelled. Still in his early teens, he began performing on CFBO in Saint John and it was while playing on the radio he caught Don Messer's ear. He initially hired Landry in 1934 as a harmonica player but promoted him to second fiddle. Together they appeared on Messer's CHSJ radio show *Backwoods Breakdown*. Performing with the great Messer gave Landry the confidence to start his own band, The New Brunswick Lumberjacks. Highly popular on the east coast, they would tour as far south as New York City, where they came second on CBS radio's *Major Bowes' Amateur Hour*.

In 1952, Landry began recording for prestigious RCA Victor, for whom he'd make eight LPs. He won the first of his three Canadian Open Old Time Fiddlers' Contests in 1956, a feat he repeated in 1957 and 1962.

A regular on CFBC radio, Saint John, in the '50s, he again teamed up with Messer on his popular CBC TV *Don Messer's Jubilee* throughout the '60s. Nobody knows quite how many fiddle tunes Landry wrote but knowledgeable estimates suggest several hundred, among them his best-known titles *Ontario Swing*, *Bowin' the Strings*, and *Hillbilly Calypso*. Ned Landry received the Order of Canada in 1992 and was inducted into the Nova Scotia Country Music Hall of Fame in 2000. He was a cousin of Stompin' Tom Connors.

— Roddy Campbell



Maartin Allcock

Born 1957

The multi-instrumentalist Maartin Allcock was born Martin Allcock in Middleton, Lancashire, on Jan. 5, 1957. (He became Maartin about 1987.) A session musician supreme on the European folk scene, he expanded his palette and range with each passing decade.

While he did his first tour with Mike Harding in 1977, his career path wasn't predestined, for he started studying to be a chef. That fizzled out. After an apprenticeship with the Bully Wee Band from 1981, he fell into the Fairport circle in 1985 in that most inevitable role of following Richard Thompson and Jerry Donahue as their lead guitarist. Deep in the full-strength "Fairport Confusion" world (of music historian Pete Frame), Allcock found himself joining Jethro Tull as keyboardist for four years from 1988.

His session work is legion. Sessions ranged from Breton guitarist Dan Ar Braz and Ralph McTell to Dave Swarbrick and Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens). Adopting Wales as his homeland and basing himself in Harlech, he made major

contributions in various capacities to Welsh music-making—especially his body of work for Wales's foremost independent label, Sain.

Recent sessions included Amy Sky, Olivia Newton John, and Beth Nielsen Chapman's Liv On and the Naples band Cirque des Rêves.

He worked on many music books. The last was transcriptions for Dave Swarbrick—*Fiddle Tunes* (2015) about Swarbrick's compositions from his days with Beryl Marriott and the Ian Campbell Folk Group to new ones. His last released recording with Fairport was as composer (*A Surfeit of Lampreys*) and participating musician on two tracks of *What We Did On Our Saturday* from Cropredy 2018. He died on Sept. 16.

— Ken Hunt

Roy Clark

Born 1933

His music career spanned 70 years when Roy Clark died, Nov. 15, age 85—his time well-played, also well-lived. A high-school drop out at 15, the multi-instrument super-picker, earned Grammy, CMA, and ACM awards, was chosen for the Grand Ole Opry and Country Music Hall of Fame, and charted 52 singles.

But he will be remembered for hosting the cornball-rich *Hee Haw* for all 24 years; the longest-running syndicated show had 30 million viewers in its heyday. In his autobiography, *My Life in Spite of Myself*, Clark explained that humour countered his painful shyness, a face-making, eye-rolling, and corny country bumpkin belying his sure-fire, lightning-fingered virtuosity.

His hits ranged from *Come Live With Me*, *Yesterday*, *When I Was Young to Thank God* and *Greyhound*, *You're Gone*.

Noted for his ubiquitous kindness, Roy Clark ended shows by telling audiences, "We had to come, but you had a choice. Thanks for being here." The sheer joy he found in sharing music will most certainly endure.

— Bruce Mason



Introducing John Craigie



John Craigie has taken pity on those of us who no longer have record players.

The Portland-based singer/songwriter originally released his latest album, *Scarecrow*, strictly on vinyl, making his sixth studio effort a very uncommon thing indeed. He only decided to allow for downloads a month or so later, making his digital-age fans sweat it out a bit.

"To be honest, that was always going to be the plan," says Craigie over the phone, back at his home in Portland after a well-received appearance at the Edmonton Folk Music Festival. "I just really thought that these songs would benefit from the vinyl treatment, and I didn't want to sell them short. Plus, I wanted people who bought it to feel like they had something a little special. However, I knew that eventually they'd have to come out as downloads, even if just for myself."

Whether released on vinyl, CD, cassette tape, or digital, *Scarecrow* was always going to be something special. Mostly made up of songs that Craigie felt didn't suit the mood of *No Rain, No Rose*, which came out a few months earlier, *Scarecrow* is a gorgeous-sounding album, full of melancholy plaints such as *Your Ghost* and *Scarlet*. Stripped down to voice and guitar, it shows off Craigie's deft lyrical touches while setting an incantatory tone, one that's hard to shrug off when the needle drops.

To get it right, Craigie needed to find a Portland studio that had the necessary gear to record in analogue, plus the equipment needed to master the final results directly to the lacquer.

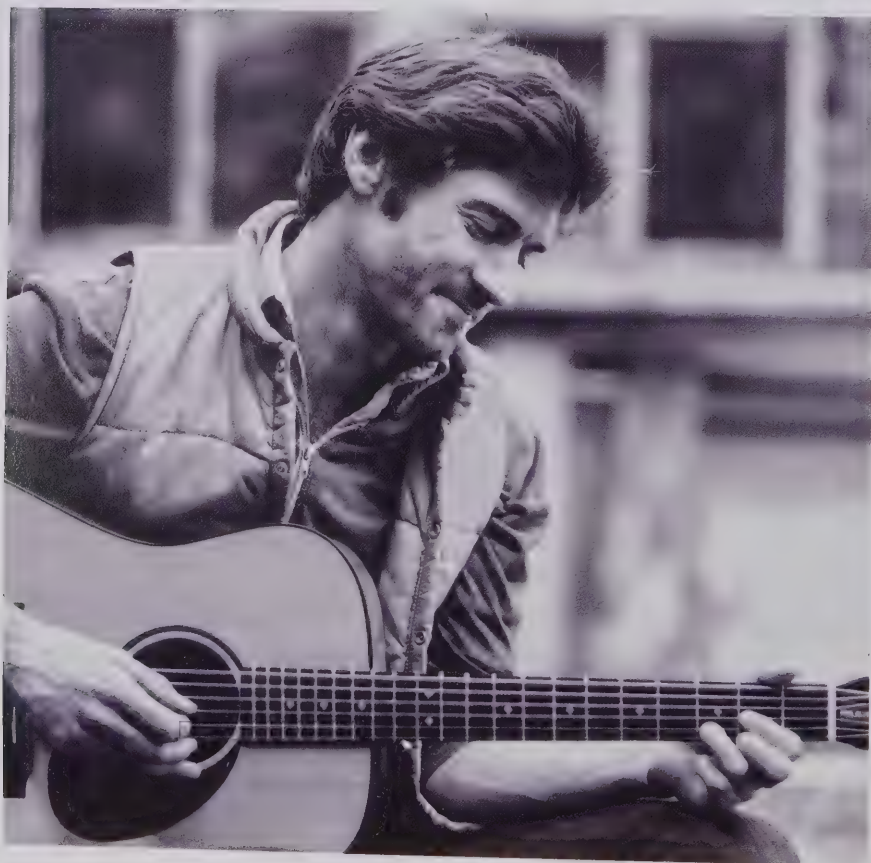
"It was quite the process," he chuckles. "It made me realize just how much harder it would have been to do this if I was using a full band. Just the amount of takes for only vocal and guitar were something else."

Like most folk musicians, Craigie started out releasing home-made albums that were simply vocal, guitar, and harmonica, beginning with 2003's *I Always – ed You*, adding other instrumentation as he whittled away at his craft. He hit his stride with 2009's *Montana Shacks*, perfecting a style that garnered him comparisons to Arlo Guthrie, John Prine, and, most tellingly, comedian Mitch Hedberg. Since then he's cruised through

record industry changes, submerged in the indie-folk underground, finding a growing audience as enamored with his sense of humour as his literate songwriting.

"It has a certain amount of built-in humility, this job," Craigie notes wryly. "It takes quite some time to develop. We live in this age where indie musicians have more of a voice, and I think it might be harder for people who are just starting out, because they expect more. Whereas when I began it was, 'Oh, you play music? Good luck!' I was always just happy to play even the smallest of gigs, and I was lucky in that, early on, I just didn't care; anything I've had since I began playing has been just gravy, really."

– By Tom Murray





Introducing Joe Nolan

Sad songs make Joe Nolan happy. That shouldn't come as a shock to anyone familiar with the singer/songwriter's first couple of records, *Goodbye Cinderella* and 2014's *Tornado*, but his melancholy taste in subject matter is definitely evident on his latest, *Cry Baby*.

"I knew that would be the title before I started recording it," he admits, taking a break from driving down to Banff in the middle of a snowstorm for a show. "I guess it's a bit of a play on Ryan Adams's *Heartbreaker*. I love that album and I especially love the vibe. It shows vulnerability. I know that with a name like *Cry Baby* it sounds like it's going to be the most depressing album ever but that's not actually the case."

It's true; you can actually feel all of the emotion on *Cry Baby*, though Nolan's propensity for sombre reflection takes over on cuts such as *Dead Ends and Damaged Hearts* and *Ode to Sturgeon County*, which features a luminous string arrangement by the late, great Tommy Banks. Recorded and released four years after Nolan's Six Shooter Records debut *Tornado*, *Cry Baby* feels like a rebirth of sorts for the Edmonton-based artist, who went off the radar after a number of years carrying around some serious hype.

"I ran into my old agent a few years ago in Nashville, and he asked me, 'What happened to Joe Nolan?' He hadn't heard anything about me for two or three years and wondered what the hell was going on."

Nolan may have disappeared from the public eye but that doesn't mean he stopped working. He continued writing for his next record, made a few passes at recording with people including Hawksley Workman, thought about what it was that he liked about being with a label, and what he didn't. Nolan then hunkered down with producer Scott Franchuk (Corb Lund & the Hurtin' Albertans) and began recording an album free of outside direction.

"He (Franchuk) was the ultimate to work with. He allowed me to experiment and help me realize the vision I had. His guidance was very gentle, and he gave me lots of leeway to direct everything. That was really special."

Also very special for Nolan is the fact that *Cry Baby* even got made, considering the half-decade that it took for him to make it.

"I've definitely felt like I've had the most growth, personally and musically, in the last five years but I also felt like it was my most stagnant period. I spent a long time waiting for others to help before I eventually took things in my own hands, steering the ship myself. I wish that someone had hammered into my head when I was 21 that you really need to watch out for your own business and not to depend on others to get things done."

Nolan has been out on the road supporting *Cry Baby*, playing solo shows in some towns, band shows in others. He's been signed to Mongrel Music in the States, and has rough plans to tour overseas in the new year. A constant writer, he intends to make sure that there are no five-year gaps between records any more.

"I spent a few years trying to accommodate people but I'm not willing to do that anymore," he sighs. "I'm just getting back to feeling like myself again."

— By Tom Murray



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Introducing Early Spirit

Any album with a list of credits that includes Natalie MacMaster, Leonard Podolak, and Geoffrey Kelly certainly demands scrutiny. Then again, Early Spirit's debut disc, *Unrelated*, also includes Jay Knutson, Kelly's old mucker from the early days of Spirit of the West. And who's that on drums? Master Ben Kelly: former Fish & Bird and son of said Geoffrey! Early Spirit, eh?—*Unrelated*: a nice play on words.

Early Spirit even cover *The Mists of Crofton* and *Doin' Quite Alright*, taken from the first SOTW self-titled LP. But that's as close as they get to their trailblazing predecessors. Will Chernoff (bass, acoustic guitar), Gabriel Dubreuil (fiddle, cello), and Ben Kelly (drums, percussion) all met performing with Vancouver's North Shore Celtic Ensemble. Knutson (acoustic and electric guitars, bouzouki) was one of their instructors. Dubreuil went on to study at Berklee for five years in Boston before returning to B.C. to direct Bad to the Bow—a community youth fiddle group based in Gibsons on the Sunshine Coast. He then formed the Gabriel Dubreuil Trio that featured Chernoff and Knutson and recorded an instrumental album, *Back to Back Bay*, in 2016. Performing largely to the francophone community on the West Coast, they then brought in young Kelly in 2017 to add a bit of clout to their gigs.

"It's weird; I never thought I'd be in a Celtic band," says Kelly. "I consider myself a rock drummer with good ears." He attributes his conversion to Richard and Linda Thompson's album *Shoot Out The Lights*.

But Kelly's creative percussion provides unique accompaniment for Dubreuil's wonderful and colourfully named fiddle tunes *Robot Clogger Set*, *Réel du Cocotier*, and *Bar of Soap Set*.

There's a refreshing quality to this quartet as they tramp a traditional path while maintaining an open and receptive ear for minor diversions such as snatches of acoustic jazz.

"Gabriel is a remarkable writer," says Knutson. "We wanted to take a non-traditional approach to how we supported [the record]. And then we brought Leonard Podolak into the mix to oversee the recording. Leonard had some pretty good ideas about taking things outside of the box. So there's a traditional element; although, all those tunes are written and arranged by us. We like to relate to the traditional aspect of it. You've got the roots, you've got the infrastructure at the core of it all, but we definitely make it our own."

While Geoffrey Kelly plays wooden flute on a couple of tracks, Podolak invited Natalie MacMaster to add her exquisite grace notes to the aforementioned *Robot Clogger Set*.

"It's a really interesting piece in an odd key," says Knutson, "Leonard said, 'It reminds me of Natalie's stuff.' And he had talked to her about a month before. And he said, 'You know, I should give her a call and she might be interested in doing a harmony part.' And sure enough, she said she'd be happy to be a part of it. It's hard to distinguish who's playing what parts; they play very similar styles. It was really nice to have her contribution."

Revisiting *The Mists of Crofton* was a homage to the emotional final days of SOTW, says Knutson. They had worked *Doin' Quite Alright* into their live sets for fun. "It's nice to be revisiting these pieces."

And where does Early Spirit go from here?

"We're writing lots and doing new tunes. It has settled into something really natural. There's a connection and dynamic onstage that I haven't felt for years since Spirit of the West, that energy and drive. I think people relate to it in many ways."

— By Roddy Campbell



L to R: Will Chernoff, Jay Knutson, Ben Kelly and Gabriel Dubreuil

Introducing The Kubasonics



“We had a lot of trouble at festivals in Canada this past summer: some people were expecting Cuban music when we showed up onstage,” Brian Cherwick, frontman of The Kubasonics, laughs as he explains the origin of his band’s name.

“Some elements of our culture are ingrained on the brain of every Ukrainian—one of these things is food. Kubasa is the name of a Ukrainian garlic sausage; if you go to Sobey’s in Winnipeg, you will find 10 different brands of it. In Western Canada, where there are a lot of people of Ukrainian descent, everyone would say, ‘Hahaha, what a great name!’. But wherever that population doesn’t exist, I have some explaining to do.”

Cherwick’s great-grandparents came to Canada from Ukraine in the early 1900s. He grew up in Winnipeg, surrounded by musicians on both sides of the family. His uncle was a professional entertainer who performed with one of Canada’s best-known Ukrainian bands, the D Drifters.

Many of his relatives were accomplished fiddlers, so he took up an accompaniment instrument, a type of hammered dulcimer known as the tsymbaly. A massive box, spanned by 150 strings (25 rows in courses of six), its function is to provide a harmonic foundation, as well as some melody and percussion.

Cherwick also plays the accordion, piano, the bandura, the pipes, and, as stated on the band’s website, “Other assorted Ukrainian folk weirdness.”

In keeping with the spirit of their familial musical heritage, Jacob Cherwick (percussion) and his sister, Maria (violin), join their father to form the dynamic, nimble-fingered band core, which is expertly rounded out by well-known Newfoundland sidemen Darren Browne (guitar, mandolin) and Matt Hender (bass).

It is an undeniable truth that the majority of Newfoundlanders don’t speak or understand Ukrainian, yet The Kubasonics are wildly popular in their adopted province. The band was dubbed “the best band to see live,” by local media, and won three MUSICNL awards for their 2017 CD, *Kubfunland*.

Language barriers notwithstanding, the power of old songs and high-velocity dance tunes is something that Newfoundlanders can relate to. A Kubasonics performance has much in common with a Newfoundland kitchen party—breakneck instrumentals, quirky humour, and a sense of infectious joy are typical aspects of each. Cherwick’s stage banter is fun and informative, giving the listener enough background about each song to grasp the crux of the story.

Ukraine has a rich song tradition that was popularized by itinerant musicians. These travelling bards (many of whom were blind) were split into two groups: those that accompanied themselves on an older version of the bandura (kobzar) or those that played the hurdy gurdy (lirnyk).

Some of the songs were religious, focussing on the lives of the saints. Others were historical or epic ballads that had a lesson for the listener. Cherwick has a terrific series of podcasts on The Kubasonics’ webpage that details the history of each track on *Kubfunland*, including past arrangements by other groups.

The Kubasonics are actively cultivating a fan base off the island, with tours being planned for Canada and Europe, and more CDs are in the works.

Whether or not you are one of Canada’s 1.2 million people who claim Ukrainian heritage, there is something in the music of The Kubasonics for you.

“The first album released in Newfoundland was all in Ukrainian,” says Cherwick. “The audiences here responded to our songs whether they understood the words or not. They didn’t really care—for them, it was less the content and more the energy that they were relating to. It was fun, that was the bottom line.”

– By Jean Hewson





Introducing

Robert Connely Farr

On trips home to his native Mississippi, Robert Connely Farr has been noticing a resurgence in the blues in the place that birthed the style. And while the old guard has increasingly been succumbing to the passing of time, Farr sees new crowds once again finding their way to one of the venerable foundational pillars of western music.

"Whenever I go home, I see people from all around, whether Americans, Europeans, Canadians, wherever, and they're all coming down to see and hear this music," says Farr. "They're there moseying up and down Highway 61, or we'll go down to Natchez and someone'll be doing the Blues Highway tour."

Farr found his own way forward playing the blues in the Bentonia style, and revels in explaining the style's origins and its underground legends with a preservationist's ardour.

"The style originated in Bentonia, Mississippi, which is south of Yazoo City on Highway 49," says Farr. "Skip James is from Bentonia, Jack Owens, and Cornelius Bright. They learned the style from a man named Henry Stuckey, who came back from World War One. Henry Stuckey met some guys in Africa who were tuning their instruments to a low minor tuning, and he brought that back to Mississippi. I guess Skip James would be the best known of the Bentonia players. It's kind of this dark, haunting style. When people ask me about it, I point them at the movie *O, Brother, Where Art Thou?* as the easiest point to start at."

On one of his trips home, Farr met Bentonia player Jimmy (Duck) Holmes, who took Farr under his wing and showed him the often-simple yet subtle intricacies that defined the Bentonia style.

On Connely Farr's debut, *Dirty South Blues*, the Bentonia style is most evident on cuts such as *Ode To The Lonesome*, *Blue Front Cafe*, and *Cypress Tree Blues*; hip-deep swampy grooves dripping with humidity. Connely Farr and producer Leeroy Stagger add some early Chicago style on the Duck Holmes cut *Just Jive*, while throwing down some mid-'50s rhythm and blues on the closer, *Hey Mr. Devil*.

"A couple times I went home, and I met Jimmy, and he showed me some things, and then I'd come back and try to figure it out," says Farr. "Then I'd go back and Jimmy'd tell me, 'Shit man, you're thinkin' too hard. It's just two chords, man'."

Having transplanted himself to Vancouver about a decade ago, Farr often finds himself trying to reconcile his hardscrabble rural roots with the vibrant, cosmopolitan city he lives in now.

"I'm from a dirt-poor town, in likely one of the poorest counties in America, and my family's been in that town for over 200 years," says Farr of his hometown, Bolton, MS.

"And now I live in this city that's, for all intents and purposes, very liberal and outside the box in its view of the world. Then I go home, and the rebel flag is flyin', and you hear the casual racist comments. It's really strange; I don't exactly notice it, because of my familiarity with it, but for my wife, it's genuinely traumatic to hear people so casual that way."

If Farr's outlook has changed, he says it's largely a matter of the impact living in such a diverse city has had on him.

"There's a part of me that loves my home, but there's another part that hates the things that go on, and have gone on there," says Farr. "But everyone knows that racism is a worldwide problem and always has been, it's just somehow convenient to hang a southern accent on it."

— By Michael Dunn



"I love the name of this magazine. *Penguin Eggs* is one of my fave songs by one of my fave singers ever, Nic Jones" – Christy Moore

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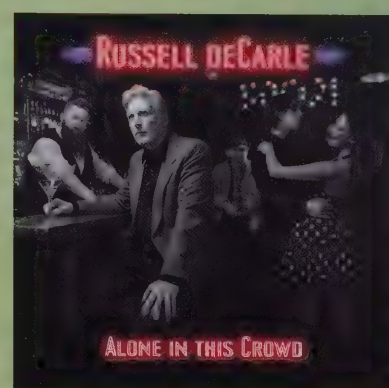
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THE CANADIAN FOLK MUSIC AWARDS

Split over two nights—Nov. 30 and Dec. 1—at The Gateway bar and performance space on the S.A.I.T. campus, Calgary, AB, the 14th annual Canadian Folk Music Awards gala proved to be a successful weekend for multiple winners The LYNNeS and Jason & Pharis Romero. Each duo picked up two awards: The LYNNeS for Ensemble of the Year and English Songwriter(s) of the Year based on the strength of their album *Heartbreak Song For The Radio*, while The Romeros received Vocal Group of the Year and Traditional Singer of the Year (Pharis)—recognition for their latest disc, *Sweet Old Religion*.

Hosted by Benoît Bourque and James Keelaghan—the latter drafted as a last-minute replacement for ailing Jean Hewson—19 categories were presented over two nights interspersed with live performances from a litany of nominees that included West of Mabou, Little Miss Higgins, and Annie Sumi & The Lifers.

“We all felt great about the entire weekend,” said CFMA spokesperson Grit Laskin. “We were pleased that the more relaxed and informal cabaret-style seating worked as we’d hoped, made everyone feel more comfortable, and really enhanced the sense of community.”

Terry Wickham, the Edmonton Folk Music Festival artistic director, received the only non-performer-based honour: The Slight Music Unsung Hero Award for his exceptional contributions to the Canadian folk music scene.

The CFMAs will be held in Charlottetown, PEI, in 2019 under the stewardship of Rob Oakie, executive director of Music PEI and a CFMA board member.

— Roddy Campbell



PHOTO BY: GRAHAM LINDSEY

MATTHEW BYRNE



PHOTO BY: GRAHAM LINDSEY

JACK PINE AND THE FIRE



PHOTO BY: KIMBERLY SANCHEZ

THE LYNNeS

CFMA CATEGORY WINNERS

TRADITIONAL ALBUM OF THE YEAR:

MATTHEW BYRNE - *HORIZON LINES*

CONTEMPORARY ALBUM OF THE YEAR:

DONOVAN WOODS - *BOTH WAYS*

CHILDREN'S ALBUM OF THE YEAR:

VARIOUS ARTISTS - *GRAND TINTAMARRE ! - CHAN SONS ET COMPTINES ACADIENNES*

TRADITIONAL SINGER OF THE YEAR:

PHARIS ROMERO - *SWEET OLD RELIGION*

CONTEMPORARY SINGER OF THE YEAR:

ROB LUTES - *WALK IN THE DARK*

INSTRUMENTAL SOLO ARTIST OF THE YEAR:

JEAN-FRANÇOIS BÉLANGER - *LES EN TRAILLES*

DE LA MONTAGNE

INSTRUMENTAL GROUP OF THE YEAR:

THE FRETLESS - *LIVE FROM THE ART FARM*

VOCAL GROUP OF THE YEAR:

PHARIS & JASON ROMERO - *SWEET OLD RELIGION*

ENSEMBLE OF THE YEAR:

THE LYNNeS - *HEARTBREAK SONG FOR THE RADIO*

SOLO ARTIST OF THE YEAR:

BRUCE COCKBURN - *BONE ON BONE*

ENGLISH SONGWRITER(S) OF THE YEAR:

LYNNE HANSON, LYNN MILES - *HEARTBREAK SONG FOR THE RADIO*

FRENCH SONGWRITER(S) OF THE YEAR:

ANIK BÉRUBÉ, NATALIE BYRNS - *LE SOLEIL EN BULLE*

INDIGENOUS SONGWRITER OF THE YEAR:

SHAUT - *APU PEIKUSSIAK*

WORLD SOLO ARTIST OF THE YEAR:

ELIANA CUEVAS - *GOLPES Y FLORES*

WORLD GROUP OF THE YEAR:

AUTORICKSHAW - *METER*

NEW/EMERGING ARTIST OF THE YEAR:

RAINE HAMILTON - *NIGHT SKY*

PRODUCER OF THE YEAR:

STEVE DAWSON - *SAME AS I EVER HAVE BEEN* (MATT PATERSHUK)

THE OLIVER SCHROER PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES AWARD:

BEATRICE DEER - *MY ALL TO YOU*

YOUNG PERFORMER(S) OF THE YEAR:

NICK EARLE, JOSEPH COFFIN - *A DAY IN JULY*

THE SLAIGHT MUSIC UNSUNG HERO AWARD:

TERRY WICKHAM

ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

AND CRITICS' FAVOURITE NEW DISCOVERIES OF 2018



Pharis and Jason Romero



Past Albums of the Year

2017: Rhiannon Giddens, *Freedom Highway* (Nonesuch)

2016: Ten Strings And A Goat Skin,

Auprès du Poêle (Independent)

2015: Jayme Stone, *Jayme Stone's Lomax Project* (Borealis)

2014: Amelia Curran, *They Promised You Mercy* (Six Shooter)

2013: David Francey, *So Say We All*, (Laker Music)

2012: Rose Cousins, *We Have Made A Spark* (Outside Music)

2011: Gillian Welch, *The Harrow & the Harvest* (Acrony)

2010: Lynn Miles, *Fall For Beauty* (True North Records)

2009: Jory Nash, *New Blue Day* (Independent)

2008: Fred Eaglesmith, *Tinderbox* (A Major Label)

2007: Alison Krauss & Robert Plant,

Raising Sand (Rounder)

2006: Bob Dylan, *Modern Times* (Columbia)

2005: Lynn Miles, *Love Sweet Love* (True North)

2004: David Francey, *The Waking Hour* (Laker Music)

2003: David Francey, *Skating Rink* (Laker Music)

2002: Harry Manx, *Wise And Otherwise* (NorthernBluest)

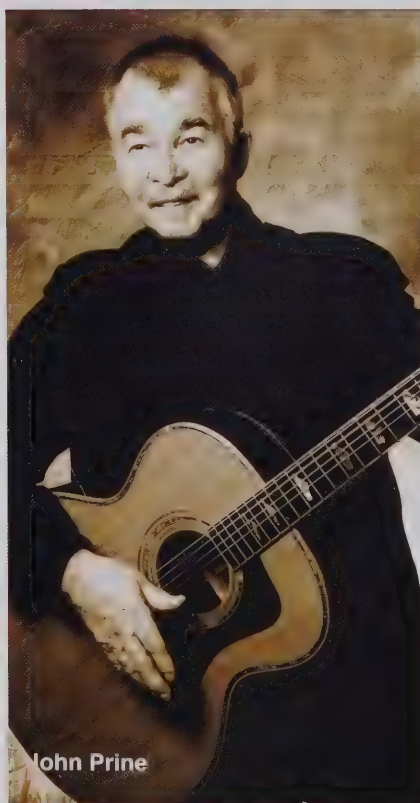
2001: David Francey, *Far End of Summer* (Laker Music)

Albums of the Year for 2018

1. Pharis & Jason Romero, *Sweet Old Religion* (Lala)
2. Ry Cooder, *The Prodigal Son* (Concorde)
John Prine, *Tree of Forgiveness* (Oh Boy)
4. Richard Thompson, *13 Rivers* (New West)
5. David Francey, *The Broken Heart*
Of Everything (Laker Music)
Lennie Gallant, *Time Travel* (Gallant Effort Productions)
Eliza Gilkyson, *Secularia* (Red House)
The Lynnes, *Heartbreak Song For The Radio* (Independent)
9. Joan Baez, *Whistle Down the Wind* (Universal)
Mary Gauthier, *Rifles & Rosary Beads* (In the Black)

New Discoveries for 2018

1. Wallis Bird
Annie Sumi
3. Early Spirit
El Coyote
I'm With Her
Kitty Macfarlane
Ranky Tank
Steve Poltz
War And Treaty



John Prine



Ry Cooder

How about that, readers? Horsefly, B.C.'s finest, top our annual critics' poll ahead of such musical heavy-weights as Ry Cooder and John Prine. Brilliant. And, oh so heart-warming.

Of course, the duo of Pharis & Jason Romero are no strangers to these pages, having graced our cover on issue No. 65 prior to winning a Juno for their previous release, the superb *A Wanderer I'll Stay*. *Sweet Old Religion*, it appears, is bound for the same kind of glory. Our reviewer Glen Herbert described it thus: "This album really does feel like...a restatement of what's important: the value of community, and place, and joy. The harmonies are thrilling as is the instrumentation..." Just so. It's also a triumphant, seamless amalgamation of acoustic folk, blues, hillbilly country, and old-time picking.

Clearly, *Sweet Old Religion* struck a chord with our numerous critics, in this *Penguin Eggs* 18th annual poll, as it edged out John Prine's sterling *Tree of Forgiveness*—his first studio album of original material in more than a decade, which features star-studded harmony vocals from the likes of Brandi Carlile and Jason Isbell.

Roots maven Ry Cooder had to take a back seat to the Romeros' recording. Possibly the greatest interpreter of American roots music, in all its various forms, Cooder's *Prodigal Son*, his first release in six years, leans largely towards black-and-white gospel, with Blind Willie Johnstone's *Nobody's Fault But Mine* a particular highlight.

Almost 40 music journalists, radio hosts, and folk club and folk festival personnel from across the country provided input on this survey. Jurors were asked to list their top 10 recordings released in 2018 and their three favourite new discoveries of the year. Every nomination received one point. The winner gathered the most.

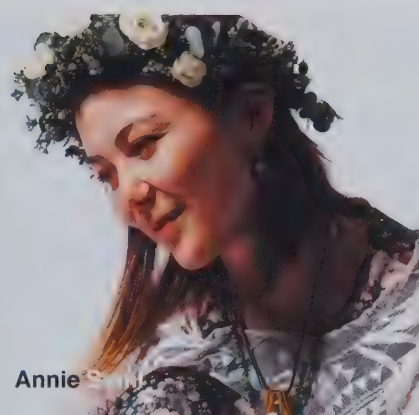
As per usual, the New Discovery category had little to separate numerous contenders. But when the final tallies were calculated, two singer/songwriters—Ireland's Wallis Bird and Canada's Annie Sumi—emerged ahead of the pack. They edged out no less than seven diverse acts drawing from acoustic jazz to Celtic jigs.

A huge thanks to all who participated in this poll. Now, check out the judges' selections and then go and discover all this wonderful new music for yourself.

— Roddy Campbell



Wallis Bird



Annie Sumi

Past New Discoveries

2017: Birds of Chicago, William Prince

2016: Dori Freeman

2015: Anna and Elizabeth

2014: Còig

2013: Milk Carton Kids

2012: Cold Specks

2011: The Barr Brothers, Carrie Elkin,

Pokey LaFarge, New Country Rehab

2010: The Once

2009: Kate Reid

2008: Amelia Curran

2007: Little Miss Higgins, Seth Lakeman,

Catherine MacLellan

2006: Crooked Still

2005: Ridley Bent, House of Doc

2004: Fiamma Fumana

2003: Rae Spoon

2002: Ruthie Foster, Kathleen Edwards

2001: Harry Manx

Mike Barker: Artistic director, Folk Under The Clock concert series, Peterborough, ON: Eliza Carthy & The Wayward Band, *Big Machine* (Topic); Duncan Chisholm, *Sandwood* (Copperfish); Connla, *The Next Chapter* (Inde-

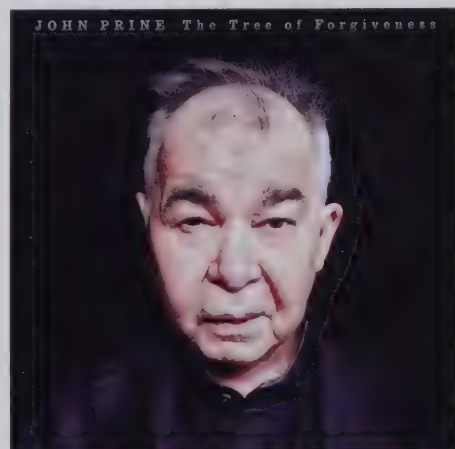
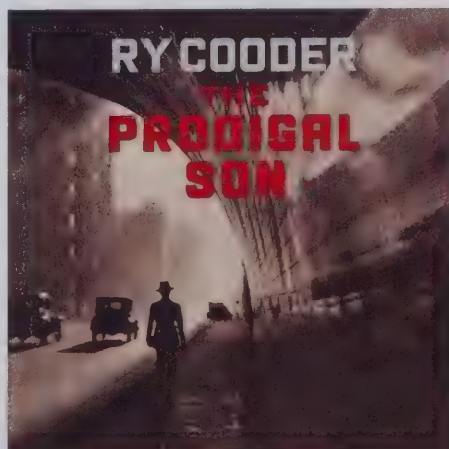
pendent); Lennie Gallant, *Time Travel* (Gallant Effort Productions); Eliza Gilkyson, *Secularia* (Red House); Lunasa, *Cas* (Lunasa); Karine Polwart with Pippa Murphy, *A Pocket of Wind Resistance* (Hudson); Alan Prosser, *5/4 AP* (Rafting Dog); Richard Thompson, *13 Rivers* (New West); Chris Wood, *So Much to Defend* (R.U.F. Records)

New Discoveries: Trio Dhoore, Kobo Town, Dr. Nativo

Jackie Bell: Writer and international fire-works adjudicator: The Barr Brothers, *Queens of the Breakers* (Secret City); Boygenius, *Boygenius EP* (Matador); Brandi Carlile, *By the Way, I Forgive You* (Elektra); Rosanne Cash, *She Remembers Everything* (Blue Note); Lenny Gallant, *Time Travel* (Gallant Effort); Eliza Gilkyson, *Secularia* (Red House); Gabrielle Papillon, *Keep the Fire* (The state51 Conspiracy); Missy Raines, *Royal Traveller* (Compass); Richard Thompson, *13 Rivers* (New West); Donovan Woods, *Both Ways* (Meant Well)

New Discoveries: LP, Lori McKenna, Ok-toEcho

Vic Bell: Artistic director, Nickelodeon Music Club, Calgary, AB: Shawna Caspi, *Forest Fire* (Independent); Bruce Cockburn,



Bone On Bone (True North); David Francey, *The Broken Heart of Everything* (Laker Music); Gunning & Cormier, *Two* (Wee House of Music/Fontana North); Little Miss Higgins, *My Home, My Heart* (L.M.H. Music); The Lynnes, *Heartbreak Song For The Radio* (Independent); Catherine MacLellan, *If It's Alright With You: The Songs of Gene MacLellan* (True North); Tri-Continental, *Dust Dance* (Tri-Continental Music); The Wailin' Jennys, *Fifteen* (True North); Donovan Woods, *Both Ways* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Wallis Bird, Steve Poltz, Shaye Zadravec

Marc Bolduc: Radio producer/host for *Tradosphère* (CKVL) and *Excusez-la!* (CIBL); Rachel Aucoin & Sabin Jacques, *Grandes rencontres* (Independent); Andrea Beaton & Véronique Plasse, *Beaton-Plasse* (Independent); Carotté, *Dansons donc un quadrille avant de passer au cash* (Independent); Genticorum, *Avant l'orage* (Independent); Marie-Pierre Lecault & Robin Boulianne, *La Suite* (Independent); Orchestre Pic-Bois, *L'Orchestre Pic-Bois* (Independent); Sophie & Fiachra/André Marchand, *Portraits* (Independent); Various artists, *Parcours d'accordéons québécois* (Maréemusique); Le Vent du Nord et De Temps Antan, *Notre album solo* (La Cie du Nord); Yves Lambert Trio, *Tentation* (Pruche libre)

New Discoveries: Tommy Gauthier et Olivier Rondeau, Marie-Pierre Lecault & Robin Boulianne, Saligaude

Allison Brown: *Border City Roots*, CJAM 99.1fm www.cjam.ca, Windsor/Detroit: Raine Hamilton, *Night Sky* (Independent); Sarah Hiltz, *Beauty In The Blue* (Independent); Lonesome Ace Stringband, *When The Sun Comes Up* (Sonnsy and Mommsy); The Lynnes, *Heartbreak Song For The Radio* (Independent); Mayhemingways, *Skip Land* (612506 Records DK2); Ali McCormick, *That Place You Know*

(Red Leaf); Les Poules A Colin, *Morose* (Steeplejack Music); Dave Quanbury, *Still Life With Canadian* (Head In The Sand); Pharis & Jason Romero, *Sweet Old Religion* (Lula); Slocan Ramblers, *Queen City Jubilee* (SloMusic)

New Discoveries: Janet Cull, Rebekah Hawker, Mama's Broke

Roddy Campbell: Editor and publisher, *Penguin Eggs*: Breabach, *Frenzy of the Meeting* (Independent); Duncan Chisholm, *Sandwood* (Copperfish); Fatoumata Diawara, *Fenfo: Something To Say* (Montuno); Rayna Gellert, *Workin's Too Hard* (Independent); Kitty Macfarlane, *Naming of Clouds* (Navigator); Solo, *Our Solo Album* (Independent); Buffy Sainte-Marie, *Medicine Songs* (True North); Hannah Sanders & Ben Savage, *Awake* (Prop-er); Stick In The Wheel, *Follow Them True* (Independent); The Wailin' Jennys, *Fifteen* (True North)

New Discoveries: Rayna Gellert, Kitty Macfarlane, Annie Sumi

Tanya Corbin: Communications manager, Edmonton Folk Music Festival: Courtney Marie Andrews, *May Your Kindness Remain* (Mama Bird); Brandi Carlile, *By the Way, I Forgive You* (Elektra); Neko Case, *Hell On* (Anti-); First Aid Kit, *Ruins* (Columbia); Mary Gauthier, *Rifles & Rosary Beads* (In the Black); Great Lake Swimmers, *The Waves, The Wake* (Nettwerk); I'm With Her, *See You Around* (Rounder); Iron & Wine, *Weed Garden* (Sub Pop); Mountain Man, *Magic Ship* (Nonesuch); The War and Treaty, *Healing Tide* (Thirty Tigers)

New Discoveries: Julien Baker, Colter Wall, The War and Treaty

Tom Coxworth: Producer, *Folk Routes*, CKUA Radio Network: Joan Baez, *Whistle Down the Wind* (Universal); The Birds of Chicago, *Love in Wartime* (Signature);

Jeremy Dutcher, *Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa* (Universal); David Francey, *The Broken Heart of Everything* (Laker Music); Lennie Gallant, *Time Travel* (Independent); Eliza Gilkyson, *Secularia* (Red House); Tracey Grammer, *Low Tide* (CD Baby); Damien Jurado, *The Horizon Just Laughed* (Outside Music); Steve Poltz, *Folksinger* (98 Pounder); Buffy Sainte-Marie, *Medicine Songs* (True North)

New Discoveries: Wallis Bird, Antje Duvekot, Raine Hamilton

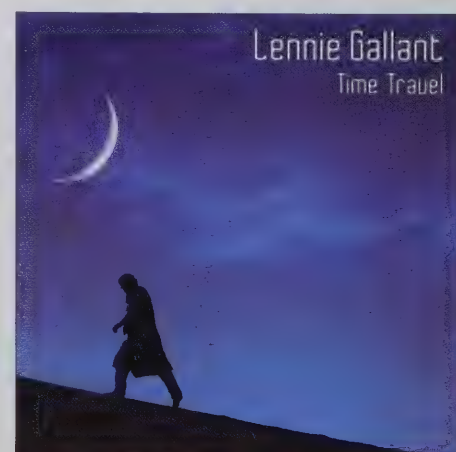
Ian Davies: Artistic director, Cuckoo's Nest Folk Club, London, ON: Arrowsmith:Robb Trio, *All the Salt* (Fallen Angle); Matthew Byrne, *Horizon Lines* (Independent); Fara, *Times From Times Fall* (Independent); Catrin Finch & Seckou Keita, *Soar* (Arc); Imar, *Avalanche* (Big Mann); Joe Jencks, *The Forgotten* (Turtle Bear); Loreena McKennitt, *Lost Souls* (Quinlan Road); Van Morrison & Joey DeFrancesco, *You're Driving Me Crazy* (Exile); Hannah Sanders & Ben Savage, *Awake* (Independent); Various artists, *The Transports* (Hudson)

New Discoveries: Gray by Silver, Kolonien, Nava

Andy Donnelly: Producer/host, *The Celtic Show*, CKUA Radio Network: Altan, *The Gap of Dreams* (Compass); T Buckley, *Miles We Put Behind* (Independent); Duncan Chisholm, *Sandwood* (Copperfish); Lennie Gallant, *Time Travel* (Independent); John Gorka, *True in Time* (Blue Chalk); Hannah Saunders & Ben Savage, *Awake* (Independent); Jim Serediak, *Lover of Life* (Forest Choir Music); Shooogenifty & Dhun Dhora, *Written in Water* (Compass); Skerryvore, *EVO* (Independent); The Tannahill Weavers, *Orach* (Compass)

New Discoveries: Steve Poltz, Shakura S'Aida, Hannah Saunders & Ben Savage

Michael Dunn: Contributor, *Penguin Eggs*, *Beatroute*: Mariel Buckley, *Driving In The*



Dark (Independent); Sean Burns & Lost Country, *Music For Taverns, Bars, and Honky Tonks* (Independent); Robert Connely Farr, *Dirty South Blues* (Independent); Copperhead, *Touch* (Independent); Alejandro Escovedo, *The Crossing* (Yep Roc); Belle Plaine, *Mercy, Malice, Grief & Wrath* (Independent); Andrea Ramolo, *Homage* (Independent); Colter Wall, *Songs Of The Plains* (Young Mary's Record Co./Thirty Tigers); Eamon McGrath, *Tantramar* (Saved By Vinyl); Shaela Miller, *Bad Ideas* (Independent); Father John Misty, *God's Favourite Customer* (Sub Pop)

New Discoveries: Boots & The Hoots, Dylan Ella, Jess Knights

Steve Edge: Artistic director, Rogue Folk Club, Vancouver, BC, (since 1987), deejay at CITR FM 101.9 radio (Vancouver) (www.citr.ca); Altan, *The Gap Of Dreams* (Compass); Ry Cooder, *The Prodigal Son* (Fantasy/Concord); Kat Danser, *Goin' Gone* (Black Hen); Early Spirit, *Unrelated* (Independent); Fatoumata Diawara, *Fenfo – Something To Say* (Montuno/Shanachie); The Fretless, *Live From The Art Farm* (Independent); Imar, *Avalanche* (Big Mann); Angelique Kidjo, *Remain In Light* (Kravenworks); Lunasa, *Cas* (Lunasa); Pharis & Jason Romero, *Sweet Old Religion* (Lula)

New Discoveries: Early Spirit, Sonah Jobarteh, Ranky Tanky

Brian Gladstone: Festival director, Winterfolk Blues and Roots Festival, www.winterfolk.com; Jason Aldean, *Rearview Town* (Broken Arrow); Joan Baez, *Whistle Down the Road* (Bobolink Razor & Tie); Johnny Cash, *American Recordings* (Republic); Bob Dylan, *More Blood, More Tracks – The Bootleg Series, Vol. 14* (Columbia/Legacy); Charles Lloyd & Lucinda Williams, *Vanished Garden* (Blue Note); John Prine, *Tree of Forgiveness* (Oh Boy); David Storey, *Made in Canada* (Independent); D'Arcy Wickham, *Signal Hill* (Independent);

Jonathan Wilson, *Rare Birds* (Bella Union); Neil Young, *Roxy Tonight's the Night* (Reprise)
New Discoveries: Black Suit Devil, Abigail Lapell, Jessica Wallen

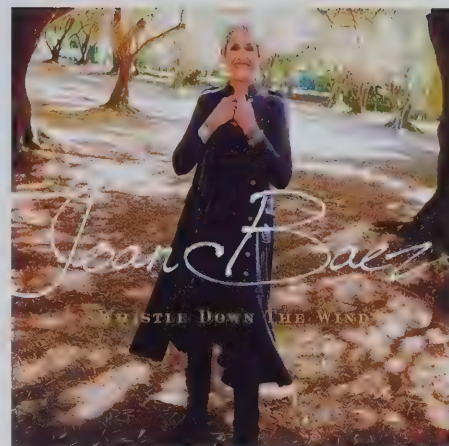
Levi Gogerla: Editor/freelance writer, music journalist, Edmonton, AB: Joan Baez, *Whistle Down the Wind* (Proper); Courtney Barnette, *Tell Me How You Really Feel* (Milk!); Marianne Faithful, *Negative Capability* (Panta Rei); Mark Lanegan & Duke Garwood, *With Animals* (Heavenly); Adrienne Lenker, *Abysskiss* (Saddle Creek); J Mascis, *Elastic Days* (Sub Pop); The Milk Carton Kids, *All the Things That I Did & All the Things That I Didn't Do* (Anti-); Father John Misty, *God's Problem Child* (Sub Pop); The Mountain Goats, *Hex of Infinite Binding* (Merge); John Prine, *Tree of Forgiveness* (Oh Boy)

New Discoveries: Alex Zhang Hungtai, Adrienne Lenker, Mark Kozelek

Barry Hammond: *Penguin Eggs* contributor: Julie Fowlis, *Alterum* (Machair); Robbie Fulks & Linda Gail Lewis, *Wild! Wild! Wild!* (Bloodshot); James Hunter, *Whatever It Takes* (Outside Music); Del McCoury, *Still Sings Bluegrass* (McCoury Music/Red); The Milk Carton Kids, *All The Things I Did and All The Things I Didn't Do* (Epitaph/Ada); Willie Nelson, *My Way* (Sony); Old Crow Medicine Show, *Volunteer* (Sony); Lydia Persaud, *Low Light EP* (Independent); Rosie & The Riveters, *Ms. Behave* (Independent); Chris Smithers, *Call Me Lucky* (Outside Music)

New Discoveries: Celeigh Cardinal, La Terza Classe, Jenie Thai

Philip Harries: Contributor, *Penguin Eggs*, and longtime Edmonton Folk Music Festival volunteer: Dave Alvin & Jimmie Dale Gilmore, *Downey to Lubbock* (Yep Roc); Joan Baez, *Whistle Down the Wind* (Independent); Ry Cooder, *The Prodigal Son* (Perro Verde); Geth-

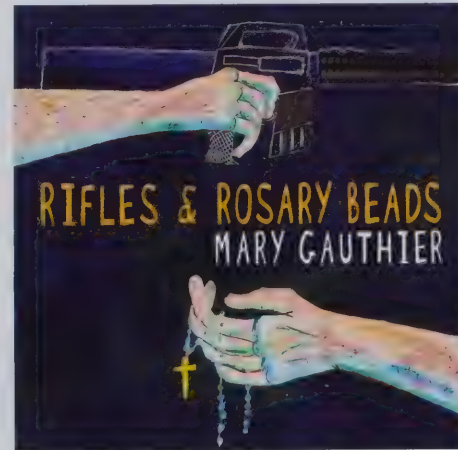


in Fôn a Glesni Fflur, *Talsarn* (KA CHING); David Francey, *The Broken Heart of Everything* (Laker); Lindi Ortega, *Liberty* (Shadowbox); Martin Simpson, *An Introduction to Martin Simpson* (Topic); Ben Sures, *Poema Poematis* (Independent); Richard Thompson, *13 Rivers* (New West); Molly Tuttle, *Rise* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Lindsay Beaver, Gwyneth Glynn, Aki Kumar

Glen Herbert: Writer/editor, Burlington, ON: Asleep At The Wheel, *New Routes* (Bismieux); Chris Coole, *The Road to the River* (Independent); Hazel Dickens & Alice Gerrard, *Sing Me Back Home: The DC Tapes, 1965-1969* (Free Dirt); I'm With Her, *See You Around* (New Rounder); Doug Paisley, *Starter Home* (No Quarter); Clay Parker & Jodi James, *The Lonesomest Sound That Can Sound* (Independent); John Prine, *The Tree of Forgiveness* (Oh Boy); Peter Rowan, *Carter Stanley's Eyes* (Rebel); The Slocan Ramblers, *Queen City Jubilee* (SloMusic); Chris Smither, *Call Me Lucky* (Signature Sounds)

New Discoveries: Dominick Leslie, Mile Twelve, Clay Parker & Jodi James



Patrick Langston: Music contributor, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Penguin Eggs*, others: Bob Dylan, *More Blood, More Tracks – The Bootleg Series, Vol. 14* (Columbia/Legacy); David Francey, *The Broken Heart of Everything* (Laker); Braden Gates, *Pictures of Us* (Borealis); Shakey Graves, *Can't Wake Up* (Dualtone); Mary Gauthier, *Rifles & Rosary Beads* (In the Black); The LYNNeS, *Heartbreak Songs for the Radio* (Independent); Old Crow Medicine Show, *Volunteer* (Sony Music Nashville); Pharis & Jason Romero, *Sweet Old Religion* (Lula); Amanda Shires, *To the Sunset* (Silver Knife); Richard Thompson, *13 Rivers* (New West)

New Discoveries: Braden Gates, Jeffrey Martin, Annie Sumi

Roger Levesque: Writer, *Edmonton Journal*, *Penguin Eggs*, etc: Lindsay Beaver, *Tough As Love* (Alligator); Eric Bibb, *Global Griot* (Stony Plain); Rory Block, *A Woman's Soul* (Stony Plain); Kat Danser & The Tall Tales, *Goin' Gone* (Black Hen); Fatoumata Diawara, *Fenfo* (Wagram); John Wort Hannam, *Acres Of Elbow Room* (Independent); Angelique Kidjo, *Remain In Light* (Kravenworks); Ali Kumar, *Hindi Man Blues* (Little Village Foundation); Pharis & Jason Romero, *Sweet Old Religion* (Lula); Emilyn Stam & Filippo Gambetta, *Shorelines* (Borealis)

New Discoveries: Las Cafeteras, Red Dirt Skinners, Young Novelists

Jim Marino: Host, *Freewheeling Folk Show*, *Freewheeling Spotlight Show*, 93.3 CFMU (cfmu.ca) Hamilton, ON: Ennis Sisters, *Keeping Time* (Independent); The Fortunate Ones, *Hold Fast* (Old Farm Pony); John Wort Hannam, *Acres of Elbow Room* (Independent); Ludgate, *What The Camera Couldn't See* (Independent); The Lynnes, *Heartbreak Song for the Radio* (Independent); Tia McGraff, *Stubborn In My Blood* (Bandana); Jory Nash, *Wilderness Years* (Thin Man); The Once, *Time Enough* (Idla); Jimmy Rankin, *Moving East* (True North); Pharis & Jason Romero, *Sweet Old Religion* (Lula)

New Discoveries: Georgian Bay, Red Dirt Skinners, Tragedy Ann

Bruce Mason: Freelance journalism/communications: Ry Cooder, *The Prodigal Son* (Concorde); David Francey, *The Broken Heart of Everything* (Laker Music); Mary Gauthier, *Rifles & Rosary Beads* (Thirty Tigers); John Wort Hannam, *Acres of Elbow Room* (Independent); Cousin Harley, *Blue Smoke* (Little Pig); I'm With Her, *See You Around* (Rounder); Damien O'Kane & Ron Block, *Banjophony* (Pure Records); John Prine, *The Tree of For-*

giveness (Oh Boy); Pharis & Jason Romero, *Sweet Old Religion* (Lula); Los Texmaniacs, *Cruzando Borders* (Smithsonian Folkways)

New Discoveries: The Dead South, Lonesome Ace Stringband, Three Women & the Truth

David McPherson: Author, *The Legendary Horseshoe Tavern: A Complete History* (Dundurn Press, 2017), follow him @mcpherson-comm; contributor, *Penguin Eggs*: Bahamas, *Earthtones* (Brushfire); Kinky Friedman, *Circus of Life* (Echo Hill); Malcolm Holcombe, *Come Hell or High Water* (Singular); Sarah MacDougall, *All The Hours I Have Left To Tell You Anything* (Label In Between); The Milk Carton Kids, *All the Things That I Did & All the Things That I Didn't Do* (Anti-); John Prine, *Tree of Forgiveness* (Oh Boy); Martha Scanlan, *The River and The Light* (Rock Ridge); Sarah Shook & The Disarmers, *Years* (Bloodshot); Becky Warren, *Undesirable* (Independent); Donovan Woods, *Both Ways* (Meant Well)

New Discoveries: Joshua Hedley, Colter Wall, Becky Warren

Tony Montague: Music journalist, *Penguin Eggs*, *fRoots*: Kevin Burke, *An Evening with Kevin Burke* (Loftus); Cha Wa, *Spyboy* (Independent); Guy Davis & Fabrizio Poggi, *Sonny and Brownie's Last Train* (Universal); Steve Dawson, *Lucky Hand* (Black Hen); Alasdair Fraser & Natalie Haas, *Ports of Call* (Culburnie); The Fretless, *Live from the Art Farm* (Independent); Mariza, *Mariza* (Warner Music Portugal); Ranky Tanky, *Ranky Tanky* (Independent); Martin Simpson, *Trails and Tribulations* (Topic); Le Vent du Nord & De Temps Antan, *Notre Album Solo* (Sunrise)

New Discoveries: Cha Wa, Farnaz Ohadi &

Mashregh Ensemble, Ranky Tanky

Tom Murray: Writer, *Edmonton Journal*, *Penguin Eggs* contributor: Bottle Rockets, *Bit Logic* (Bloodshot); Jonathan Byrd & the Pickup Cowboys, *Jonathan Byrd & the Pickup Cowboys* (Independent); Rosanne Cash, *She Remembers Everything* (Blue Note); Bonny Doon, *Longwave* (Woodstix); Mary Gauthier, *Rifles & Rosary Beads* (In the Black); The Gibson Brothers, *Mockingbird* (Easy Eye Sound); Mount Eerie, *Now Only* (P.W. Elverum & Sun); John Prine, *The Tree of Forgiveness* (Oh Boy); Pharis & Jason Romero, *Sweet Old Religion* (Lula); Richard Thompson, *13 Rivers* (New West)

New Discoveries: Bird City, The Dice Cubes, Dom Flemons

David Newland: Writer, performer, emcee: Joan Baez, *Whistle Down the Wind* (Proper); Brandi Carlile, *By The Way I Forgive You* (Low Country Sound/Elektra); Ry Cooder, *The Prodigal Son* (Fantasy); Jeremy Ducher, *Wolastoqi-yik Lintuwakonawa* (Jeremy Dutcher/Fontana North); Kaia Kater, *Grenades* (Independent); Mike T Kerr, *Guitar Rags & Country Ballads* (Independent); Jory Nash, *Wilderness Years* (Independent); William Prince, *Earthly Days* (Glassnote); John Prine, *The Tree of Forgiveness* (Oh Boy); Ian Tamblyn, *Let It Go* (North Track)

New Discoveries: Dennis Ellsworth, Kubasonics, Mayhemingways

Peter North: Artistic director, Roots and Blues, Salmon Arm: Sue Foley, *The Ice Queen*, (Stony Plain); I'm With Her, *See You Around* (Rounder); Irvine, Lunny, Glackin, McGoldrick, & Doyle, *Usher's Island* (Compass); Charles Lloyd & The Marvels and Lucinda



Williams, *Vanished Gardens* (Blue Note); *The Travelin' McCourys*, (McCoury Music); Peter Rowan, *Carter Stanley's Eyes* (Rebel); Pharis & Jason Romero, *Sweet Old Religion* (Lula); Curtis Salgado & Alan Hager, *Rough Cut* (Alligator Records); Slocan Ramblers, *Queen City Jubilee* (Slocan Ramblers); Richard Thompson, *13 Rivers* (New West).

New Discoveries: Early Spirit, Lil' Smokies, The Turbans

j. poet: Freelance writer based in San Francisco, contributor to *Penguin Eggs*, *Rock-and-roll Globe*, others: Dave Alvin & Jimmie Dale Gilmore, *Downey To Lubbock* (Yep Roc); Anna & Elizabeth, *The Invisible Comes To Us* (Smithsonian/Folkways); Rory Block, *A Woman's Soul* (Stony Plain); Book Of J, *Book Of J* (3rd Generation); Ry Cooder, *The Prodigal Son* (Fantasy); Dom Flemons, *Black Cowboys* (Nonesuch); Eliza Gilkyson, *Secularia* (Red House); Frank Newsome, *Gone Away With A Friend* (Free Dirt); Old Crow Medicine Show *Volunteer* (Columbia Nashville); John Prine, *The Tree Of Forgiveness* (Oh Boy)

New Discoveries: Book Of J, I'm With Her, Frank Newsome.

Rob Oakie: Executive director, Music PEI, part-time mandolinist: Meaghan Blanchard, *Great Escape* (Independent); David Crosby, *Hear to Listen* (BMG); Tommy Emmanuel & David Grisman, *Pickin'* (Acoustic Disc); Jenni & The Hummingbird, *Your Masterpiece* (Independent); Mark Knopfler, *Down the Road Wherever* (British Grove/Virgin EMI); Andrew Marlin, *Buried in a Cape* (Mandolin Orange LLC); Dylan Menzie, *As The Clock Rewinds* (Independent); Slocan Ramblers, *Queen City Jubilee* (SloMusic); John Smith, *Hummingbird*



(Commoner); Vishtën, *Horizons* (Productions Takashoun)

New Discoveries: Earl & Coffin, Get Well Pharmacy

John Prentice: Host/producer, *Planet Mainstage* (101.5 UMFM, umfm.com): Autorickshaw, *Meter* (Tala Wallah); The East Pointers, *What We Leave Behind* (East Pointers Music); The Fretless, *Live from the Ant Farm* (Independent); Eliza Gilkyson, *Secularia* (Red House); Raine Hamilton, *Night Sky* (Independent); Kieran Kane & Rayna Gellert, *Ledges* (Dead Reckoning); James Keelaghan & Jez Lowe, *Live in Freemantle* (Tantobie); The Lynnes, *Heartbreak Song for the Radio* (Independent); Buffy Sainte-Marie, *Medicine Songs* (True North); Tri-Continental, *Dust Dance* (Tri-continental Music)

New Discoveries: Wallis Bird, Alexi Campaigne, Fatoumata Diawara

Tim Readman: Anglo-Canadian guitarist, singer, songwriter, and producer: Molly Evans, *Deep Time and Narrow Space* (Independent);

The Gloaming, *Live at the NCH* (Real World); Jez Lowe, *The Dillen Doll CD* (Tantobie); Kitty Macfarlane, *Namer of Clouds* (Navigator); Rachael McShane & the Cartographers, *When All Is Still* (Topic); The Milk Carton Kids, *All the Things That I Did and All the Things That I Didn't Do* (Anti-); Hamish Napier, *The Railway* (Strathspey); Jackie Oates, *The Joy of Living* (Independent); Punch Brothers, *All Ashore* (Nonesuch); Lucy Ward, *Pretty Warnings* (Betty Beetroot)

New Discoveries: Molly Evans, Kitty Macfarlane, Rachael McShane & the Cartographers

Mike Regenstreif: Journalist, CKCU folk radio host, blogger (frfb.blogspot.com), and folk music maven: Darol Anger & Emy Phelps, *Music of Our People* (Independent); Ry Cooder, *The Prodigal Son* (Fantasy); Bob Dylan, *More Blood, More Tracks: The Bootleg Series Vol. 14* (Columbia/Legacy); Reggie Harris, *Ready to Go* (Independent); Jimmy LaFave, *Peace Town* (Music Road); Maria Muldaur, *Don't You Feel My Leg: The Naughty Bawdy Blues of Blu Lu Barker* (The Last Music Company); Maggie Roche, *Where Do I Come From: Selected Songs* (StorySound); Tom Russell, *Old Songs Yet to Sing* (Frontera); Orit Shimoni, *Lost and Found on the Road to Nowhere* (Independent); Various artists, *Yiddish Glory: The Lost Songs of World War II* (Six Degrees)

New Discoveries: El Coyote, David Davis & The Warrior River Boys, Nina Ricci

Eric Rosenbaum: Former CBC Radio producer/reporter, *Penguin Eggs* contributor: AHI, *In Our Time* (22nd Century); The Algonquin Ensemble, *Sonic Palette: Tom Thomson's Voice Through Music 100 Years Later* (thealgonquinensemble.com); Birds of Chicago, *Love In Wartime* (Signature); Ry Cooder, *The Prodigal Son* (Fantasy); Laura Cortese & the Dance Cards, *California Calling* (Compass); Doug Paisley, *Starter Home* (No Quarter); John Prine, *The Tree of Forgiveness* (Oh Boy); Sarah





Kitty Macfarlane

Shook & the Disarmers, *Years* (Bloodshot); Richard Thompson, *13 Rivers* (New West); Shaye Zadravec, *Norway* (Independent)

New Discoveries: AHI, Laura Cortese & the Dance Cards, Shaye Zadravec

Mike Sadava: Writer of journalism and fiction, occasional musician: Darol Anger & Emy Phelps, *Music of Our People* (Independent); Andrew Collins Trio, *Tongue and Groove* (Independent); The Confabulation, *Tunnels and Visions* (Independent); Scott Cook, *Further Down the Line* (Independent); Vince Halfhide, *Vince Halfhide* (Independent); Eamon McGrath, *Tantramar* (Saved By Vinyl); St. Paul & the Broken Bones, *Young Sick Camelina* (Independent); Michael Rault, *It's a New Day Tonight* (Wick); Pharis & Jason Romero, *Sweet Old Religion* (Lula); The Weather Station, *The Weather Station* (Paradise of Bachelors)

New Discoveries: Greensky Bluegrass, St. Paul & the Broken Bones, The Weather Station

Jason Schneider: Author of *Whispering Pines: The Northern Roots of American Music* and co-author of *Have Not Been The Same: The CanRock Renaissance 1985-1995*; Mariel Buckley, *Driving In The Dark* (Independent); Kyp Harness, *Kyp Harness* (Independent); The Jayhawks, *Back Roads and Abandoned Motels* (Sony Legacy Recordings); Joe Nolan, *Cry Baby* (Independent); Lindi Ortega, *Liberty* (Last Gang); Belle Plaine, *Malice, Mercy, Grief and Wrath* (Independent); Cat Power, *Wanderer* (Domino); Andrea Ramolo, *Homage* (Independent); Craig Robertson, *Late Mornings* (Independent); Colter Wall, *Songs Of The Plains* (Young Mary's Record Co.)

New Discoveries: Aaron Allen & The Small City Saints, Elk Run & Riot, The Maple City

les siemieniuk: Penguin Eggs contributor, host, former CBC music producer, and general manager, Calgary Folk Music Festival: Jon Brooks, *No One Travels Alone* (Borealis); T Buckley, *Miles We Put Behind* (884592 Records); Rosanne Cash, *She Remembers Everything* (Blue Note); Alejandro Escovedo, *The Crossing* (Yep Roc); Lennie Gallant, *Time Travel* (Independent); Eliza Gilkyson, *Secularia* (Red House); John Wort Hannam, *Acres of Elbow Room* (Independent); Gretchen Peters, *Arguing with Ghosts* (Scarlet Letter); Pharis & Jason Romero, *Sweet Old Religion* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Mattie Leon, Annie Sumi, Tragedy Ann

Eric Thom: Music writer, Toronto: Brooke Annibale, *A Black & Tan Ball* (Tantamount); Ry Cooder, *Prodigal Son* (Universal); Kat Danser, *Goin' Gone* (Black Hen); Tinsley Ellis,



Steve Poltz

Winning Hand (Alligator); Julian Fauth, *The Bleak and the Wicked/The Hard and the Strong* (Electro-Fi); Lizanne Knott/Jesse Terry/Michael Logen, *Sunset Avenue Sessions* (Trans-oceanic); Cary Morin, *When I Rise* (Independent); Sherry Ryan, *Wreckhouse* (Independent); Orit Shimoni, *Lost and Found on the Road to Nowhere* (Independent); Boz Scaggs, *Out of the Blues* (Concord)

New Discoveries: The Belle Miners, Eddie Heinzelman, Red Wanting Blue

Greg Torrington: Music programmer/curator for folk, blues, Americana, bluegrass channels for Stingray Digital (Canada & U.S.): Ry Cooder, *The Prodigal Son* (Fantasy/Concord); Dave Alvin & Jimmie Dale Gilmore, *Downey to Lubbock* (Yep Roc); Buddy Guy, *The Blues Is Alive and Well* (Silverstone/RCA/Sony); Lindsay Lou, *Southland* (Independent); Lori McKenna, *The Tree* (Creative Nation/Thirty Tigers); Tami Neilson, *Sassafrass!* (Outside Music); Old Crow Medicine Show, *Volunteer*



Ranky Tank

(Columbia); Pharis & Jason Romero, *Sweet Old Religion* (Lula); Rhyann Sinclair, *Barnstormer* (Little Haunted Girl); Suzie Vinnick, *Shake The Love Around* (Independent)

New Discoveries: El Coyote, Low Lily, Kalyna Rakel

Jan Vanderhorst: Host, *Just Us Folk*, AM 1380 CKPC, Brantford, ON: AHI, *In Our Time* (22nd Sentry); Rosanne Cash, *She Remembers Everything* (Blue Note); Ennis Sisters, *Keeping Time* (Independent); David Francey, *The Broken Heart Of Everything* (Laker Music); Lennie Gallant, *Time Travel* (Independent); Raine Hamilton, *Night Sky* (Independent); The Lynnes, *Heartbreak Song On The Radio* (Independent); Loreena McKennitt, *Lost Souls* (Quinlan Road); Jory Nash, *Wilderness Years* (Thin Man); Suzie Vinnick, *Shake The Love Around* (Independent)

New Discoveries: Calan, Goitse, The Lynnes

Lisa Wilton: Calgary-based freelance writer, host of *The Takeaway*, CKUA Radio, CKUA.com: Courtney Marie Andrews, *May Your Kindness Remain* (Fat Possum); David Byrne, *America Utopia* (Nonesuch); Brandi Carlile, *By the Way, I Forgive You* (Elektra); First Aid Kit, *Ruins* (Columbia); Great Lake Swimmers, *The*



Waves, The Wake (Nettwerk); Kaia Kater, *Grenades* (Smithsonian Folkways); Sarah Shook & The Disarmers, *Years* (Bloodshot); Richard Thompson, *13 Rivers* (New West); Frank Turner, *Be More Kind* (Independent); The War & Treaty, *Healing Tide* (Strong World)

New Discoveries: I'm With Her, Sarah Shook & The Disarmers, The War & Treaty

Michael Wrycraft: Album Designer, Emcee, Radio Host: Jon Brooks, *No One Travels Alone* (Borealis); Tim Isberg, *Running On The Edge*

(Independent); Jory Nash, *Wilderness Years* (Thin Man); Randy Newman, *Dark Matter* (Nonesuch); Outside I'm A Giant, *Point Comfort* (Independent); Kalyna Rakel, *Before & After You* (Independent); Gord Sheard & Sinal Aberto, *A New Day* (Independent); Paul Simon & Various artists, *Graceland: The Remixes* (Legacy Recordings); Emilyn Stam & Filipo Gambetta, *Shorelines* (Borealis); Various Artists, *The Al Purdy Songbook* (Borealis)

New Discoveries: Tyra Jutai, *Outside I'm A Giant*, Dione Taylor.





The Fretless

This sublime string ensemble's dynamic and sophisticated melodies are rooted in Irish music.

By Tony Montague

The interplay between Western classical music and the instrumental tunes of the Anglo-Celtic world is very old. Three hundred years ago, the blind harper Turlough O'Carolan was strongly inspired by Italian baroque composers. The members of the quartet The Fretless—fiddlers Trent Freeman and Karnnel Sawitsky, viola player Ben Plotnick, and cellist Eric Wright—give that ancient relationship a bright, contemporary twist.

On their current release *Live From The Art Farm*, the music is harmonically sublime, melodically sophisticated, deeply grooved, and rooted at once in the turf of Irish music and the string ensemble.

"There are many similarities between us and a classical quartet," says Freeman. "We did a couple of classical festivals this summer where we got a lot of compliments on our ensemble playing. Each of us has our different role. I often play rhythm with Eric, and Ben and Karnnel make up the chordal textures and the melody. But that's all fluid within the group as well. It's less about the individual role you end up playing, more about the unified sound."

The Fretless came together in 2011 and have recorded four albums. "Originally it was [former member] Ivonne Hernandez and myself, and we were living in Boston study-

ing at the Berklee College of Music. Karnnel was a friend of mine for years. And Eric was a student at Berklee, too, but we didn't know him. He was a connection that came through a mutual teacher, John McGann. When we called Eric, he was living in L.A. working for EMI in music licensing—so it didn't take much to quit it all and become a member of a Canadian folk band!

"We locked ourselves up at my parents' place in Comox [BC] for eight days, and wrote *Waterbound*, our first album," Freeman recalls. "At that point it was a collection of a few tunes we'd already written, rearranged for the group. We did a show in Nanaimo, and then went into the studio and recorded it all."

Each Fretless album has a distinctive character. "Listening back now, *Waterbound* has a very different sound to the others. It was a



brand new collaboration, and we were open to any idea and trying everything out. It ends up to me having a bit more of a classical feel. Lighter, and also more Canadian. By the second album [the self-titled *Fretless*] we'd been on the road a couple of years. Eric and I had really developed this way of playing together where our rhythmic engine is very locked together. The album has a cohesiveness at the core of the rhythmic driver.

"That's persisted through the other albums as well. Like the 'chopping' thing you hear on our records—what we've done is to split it between two instruments, as well as have them combined. So it's not a single stringed instrument leading the groove, it's a combination that creates an entire drum set and rhythm section. The idea with *Bird's Nest*, the third album, was to have more original tunes, to explore our own writing now that we had this driver and The Fretless had its own unique sound."

The hallmark sound is in part due to the limitations the band has chosen to give itself. Lacking a chordal instrument—piano, keyboard, guitar, or accordion—The Fretless has developed a way of replicating one, and providing extra punch.

"That's one of my favourite parts of the whole process," says Freeman. "Often at our arranging sessions I'll be at a piano and we'll come up with a chord progression we want, and then we pick that piano line and give each musician one or two notes. You end up with four voices creating a single unified texture. That's the biggest part of our sound, really. The

trick is to match your approach. It's not just the notes you're playing, it's your attack and your release, so that you've locked in with the other person."

A challenge for any instrumental group, especially in the Anglo-Celtic tradition, is to maintain the emotional engagement of listeners without words.

"A singer can so easily deliver a message through lyrics and inflection on the voice. It's so direct, and so tangible. Our approach needs to be so intentional and unified that the message still comes across. If everyone is on the same page as to how you're going to transmit that, it can be more powerful than anything. And I love the space it gives to listeners as well, not being told the exact meaning, and therefore able to interpret it, and experience a response of their own."

Another way of achieving the emotive force of a singer is to reimagine the tune of a familiar song. Perhaps the most beautiful track on *Live At The Art Farm* is the quartet's interpretation of *The Dawning Of The Day – Fainne Geal An Lae*. It's best known as the evocative air for *On Raglan Road*, with words by one of Ireland's greatest poets, Patrick Kavanagh (1904-1967).

"That air has been in our repertoire for years. On the album you can hear on it our different styles of playing. Karnnel starts it out, and that swing that he has inherent in his playing is very obvious, and the melody is quite slow. Then Ben takes it over and it kind of straightens out. Allowing for individuality while still having a unified sound is something we value a lot."

The members of The Fretless show a keen sense for the dynamics of their arrangements. The touches can be very simple—on *Live At The Art Farm*'s opening set of reels, *MacLeod's Farewell*, the musicians suddenly stop playing at the end of a phrase, after a brief pause they all play the same six notes in rapid succession with rising volume, then resume the phrase where they left off. The lift this interjection provides is powerful.

In December, The Fretless will be doing the Christmas Celtic Sojourn in Boston, then fly to Australia in January for a month-long tour. They'll have some Ontario dates in April and be back in the U.K. and Ireland in May.

"We're already working on the next album, which is moving slightly away from the traditional zone. This time we're going to have some vocalists. We're still ironing out who they'll be—but Ruth Moody is one, for sure. We love being a backup band, and the possibility of all the expansive string parts that we could do to elevate a song."

Turlough O'Carolan would approve.





Rachel Aucoin & Sabin Jaques

The tunes of celebrated Québécois accordionist Philippe Bruneau receive an exquisite new airing.
By Marc Bolduc

Grandes Rencontres...
...seminal encounters. The meeting of two musicians, each perfectly attuned to the other. A blending of two musical genres. A tale of two duos, a few decades apart.

These words lead off the booklet for the new CD *Grandes Rencontres* and capture the essence of this project, from the piano/accordion duo of Rachel Aucoin and Sabin Jaques, dedicated to the compositions and interpretations of renowned accordionist Philippe Bruneau (1934-2011). This album, both visionary and nuanced, presents a succession of grand en-

counters and crossed destinies. It is sensitive to the composer's legacy but also coloured by the creativity of the performers.

Though the album had its origins in a concert showcasing Bruneau's oeuvre for the Festival La Grande Rencontre (Montreal), it is also the logical outcome to the shared trajectory of the two artists behind this project. Rachel Aucoin was more familiar with classical music and the traditional music of New Brunswick and Cape Breton (Cheticamp) when she discovered, in 1997, Philippe Bruneau's repertoire, played by none other than Sabin Jacques, accompanied on piano by Dorothee Hogan, Bruneau's own accompanist of choice!

Sabin Jacques, meanwhile, met Philippe Bruneau in 1984 at a memorable concert in Pointe-au-Père and was awed by the sensitivity and fire in his playing. Aucoin and Jacques have been partners, both artistically and in life, since 1999. Their musical journey has led them to work together on different projects;

they have played in several bands (Domino, Raz-de-Marée), taught traditional music at camps (most recently, at their own "De souche à oreille"), played for innumerable dances, and presented concerts both as part of large festivals such as the Carrefour mondial de l'accordéon (Montmagny) and in the more intimate context of house concerts.

Throughout, the repertoire of the great composer—Bruneau—was present. Rachel Aucoin sums it all up by saying: "It seems to me that Sabin and I have been preparing this album implicitly since we met in 1999. Life has taken us in all sorts of directions, musical and otherwise... All that time, in the background, there was always the possibility of playing, just the two of us. Inevitably, Philippe Bruneau's compositions were a very high percentage of the music that interested us. I think it's the torch that welded us both to this music."

Working with Bruneau's repertoire is not an easy task, primarily because he left such a

strong musical heritage. He is celebrated now not only for his composing genius but also for his personal stance on Québécois music and his conception of the way it should be played. This giant of the Québécois diatonic accordion gave us more than 150 tunes, the melodies of which are quite varied. Many of his compositions present significant interpretative challenges.

When they started selecting the musical pieces they wanted for the project, Aucoin and Jacques realized that they were working with two distinct sets of repertoire: on the one hand, the pieces composed, arranged, and recorded by the original duo of Philippe Bruneau and Dorothée Hogan; and on the other, lesser-known tunes that had been recorded informally on cassette tapes and distributed loosely to the composer's friends all over the world.

For tunes in the first category (*Hommage à Alfred Montmarquette*, *Un Canadien errant*, *Hommage à Dorothée*, *Hommage à John Kimmel*, and *Hommage aux musiciens traditionnels*), it was difficult to step away from the original interpretation, even given the creative potential of the Aucoin-Jacques duo.

"Over time, I've developed my own language for accompanying traditional music and that allows me now to imagine colours and ambiances that could potentially take a melody somewhere else. Nothing like this had been done before. All of the pieces that Bruneau and Hogan had arranged had become classics, untouchable, in a way," says Aucoin.

Indeed, the musical partnership of Philippe Bruneau and Dorothy Hogan had been instrumental, according to Jacques, in "getting folklore out of the kitchen and bringing it into the concert hall ... to pave the way for listening music, for music that is worth hearing simply for what it is." For those pieces, Aucoin and Jacques chose to strictly observe the composer's own arrangements and interpretive approach.

For tunes in the second category, Bruneau's rough renderings on cassette—typically the melody accompanied by his own chords on piano—offered lots of space for interpretation.

For Jacques, Bruneau's compositions are "like stories, with a beginning, a middle, and an end."

Taking a creative approach to Bruneau's repertoire means finding a way to tell a story through the music, as he himself did. Aucoin adds: "Music, in the form that we engage with it, comes as close as possible to a human relationship. People talk or listen to each other, more or less... The more fluid and palpable the human connection, the more the music will carry its message to others. ...In our case, I have always found that that connection feels easy and natural. As if it were our mother tongue."

There is no doubt that this album has risen to the challenge posed by Bruneau's repertoire, and the duo's approach and interpretations are rich and moving.

More than a musical crossroads spanning two generations, *Grandes Rencontres* is a masterful meeting of two exceptionally talented musicians. Although the accordion is the primary melody instrument, the piano is never left behind or used as a musical stooge. The album proposes a conversation between two instruments in which exchange and dialogue are carried out through a process of mutual listening and respect. The implicit complicity between the two interpreters is palpable and emerges as a warm sound, oscillating between softness and strength, much to the delight of listeners.

Grandes Rencontres encapsulates several musical encounters that have marked the history of Quebec traditional music: first that of Philippe Bruneau and Dorothée Hogan and then the meeting of their music, almost four decades later, with the duo of Rachel Aucoin and Sabin Jacques.

This CD is a meeting of two instruments; of two musical universes (classical and traditional) that can, at times, seem distant; and above all, the meeting of two exquisite performers.

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Dave Harris

The likes of Stephen Stills and Ian Tyson celebrated Victoria's unique one-man band busker.

By Bruce Mason

The rich musical life and legacy of Dave Harris is much greater than the sum of its eclectic parts. He stopped counting new songs in his repertoire at 500, CDs he's recorded after finishing his 50th,

albums he's collected beyond 10,000. And he no longer actively seeks information to add to his definitive, 419-page *Head, Hands and Feet: A Book of One Man Bands*.

From early spring to late fall—and on windless, sunny days in between—he's seen and heard at one of Canada's most popular destinations: Victoria's Inner Harbour, linking the Tourist Info Centre, famed Empress Hotel, Provincial Museum, and Legislature.

A good deal of the action and attractions are below on the pedestrian causeway. Against a spectacular backdrop of sea and sky, assorted moored vessels and waterfront condos,

jugglers, carvers, statue acts, and others set up shop. Art, performance, and commerce take shape, as Harris unpacks in the north corner, featuring some seating, shelter, ambience, and food trucks. It's been his home base for decades.

"My current setup is Farmer foot drums (bass, high-hat, snare, woodblock, shakers, and tambourine), National steel body tricone 12-string, Regal single cone steel body, six-string banjo, fiddle, a stack of concert harps, stool, stands, bungee cords, a four-wheeled hand cart, books, CDs, and strings," he reports. "That's scaled back over the years, including another guitar, fiddle, and Dobro mandolin."

Also missing in action: a fotdella, the foot-operated bass, invented by legendary one-man band (OMB), Jesse (Lone Cat) Fuller, who wrote the enduring *San Francisco Bay Blues*. "Too heavy, quiet, and prone to break-down," says Harris, who hopes for improvements to integrate and round out his instrument arsenal.

"It still takes 15 minutes to arrange everything and tear it all down," he reports. "I'm wary of gusts of wind, after a few instruments toppled over and broke. And keep a large umbrella handy, for rain, shade, and shelter from bird droppings."

He often plays guitar, or banjo, simultaneously with drums and rack harmonica, switching to fiddle, with no break in the beat. That makes him unique. And he would know.

"I couldn't find any OMB information, so I spent three years of evenings and off-seasons researching and writing *Head, Hands and Feet*. It includes 900 examples and 1,200 visuals, from Japan, Australia, all over Europe, and North America."

For years he stuck with his passion for blues, becoming an authoritative player—following in the long tradition of blues artists on the street—and an authority on the subject. Over time he learned that diverse, upbeat material works best when busking. So he integrated folk, rock, country, and bluegrass, mixing genres and generations, while introducing and showcasing his more obscure blues mentors.

After decades of busking, his own compositions get the biggest shout-outs from regulars and returning visitors, such as *Crowded at the Bottom*, and the most-requested *Give Them Their Flowers*.

A request for stories is filled as quickly and cheerfully as a query for songs. A \$20US tip from Stephen Stills, in town for a CSN concert. Another \$20—this time Canadian—while tuning his 12-string. "Don't bother, they're never in tune. Do you know *Summer Wages*?" asked Ian Tyson, who wrote it and enjoyed Dave's rendition.

Full circle: on a rare busking stint in his hometown Toronto, he was honoured to accept a between-songs invitation from Sylvia Tyson to join her band onstage that evening.

Impromptu passersby who pick up a guitar not in use have included Colin James, wowing onlookers with *Crossroads*. And hoop star Steve Nash, who fell a tad short. "Don't give up your day job," the crowd jeered the good sport, good naturedly.

His biggest hit: the elderly lady who tipped Harris a generous \$5. Then, after a few minutes of fiddle music, emptied her change purse into his case, including a roll of bills, wrapped with an elastic band. She then disappeared, anonymous and untraceable, shouting, "Thank you! Thank you!" Harris, who had never before seen a \$100 bill, curious about the outer brown colour, peeled it off and counted the contents—\$562. Unable to return what he calls a "ridiculous" tip, he purchased a better violin the following day.

Dave typically starts about 10 a.m. at his "office," includes a lunch break, and signs off about 5 p.m. Often a night shift is added. He once logged 13 hours straight and laughs at musicians who complain of two and three-hour concerts.

"Few people think of busking as a career and some look down on it as begging, dropping doggy bags from lunch or dinner in my case, or almost anything else you can think of. But I've made it work, since the mid-'70s, and never had a welfare or regular paycheck.

"I chose a quality of life I like, to sleep in my own bed, work in a beautiful environment, and meet new people from all around the world, every day" he explains.

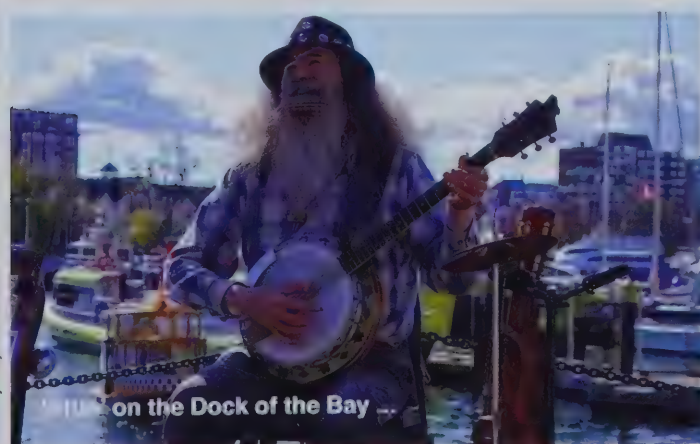
"It's commonplace to be approached by middle-aged people who watched me as children, often with their own offspring in tow. Some of the best moments include one-year-olds jiggling around, looks of wonder on their faces, elderly couples dancing to *Blueberry Hill*, and groups getting down to *Slippin' and Slidin'*.

"Sometimes I feel old, but proud to still be here and remembered, hoping to be busking until the day I die," concludes Harris.

Adding up the folks he has made music with on the street and elsewhere, and the number of bands he has played in, off-street, over the years, is impossible. A best guess would likely come close, if not top, virtually anyone else, anywhere. Among other groups, he currently plays in a skiffle band and The Three Daves, which performs Hank Williams, exclusively.

Harris qualifies as a national legend, if not treasure. For proof, Google "Dave Harris One Man Band", or search YouTube to experience that yourself. Better yet, drop by Victoria's Inner Harbour. You can't miss Dave Harris, One-Man Band.

For a list of his tips and etiquette for buskers, email brucemason@shaw.ca.



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Grace Petrie

Her evocative, hard-hitting, angry protest songs rail against the policies of austerity ...

By Cara Gibney

May 1, 1997, was a game-changer for the U.K. Indeed, it's an enduring memory for Grace Petrie, who can recall her nine-year-old self staying up

with her parents as they drank champagne to 6 a.m.: "The morning that we saw the Tories out of Number 10."

The country had lived through 18 years of Conservative government. Her uncle was ready to emigrate. "It's a very defining memory from my childhood, I suppose, the night that Labour won in '97. It was a total party."

The apple doesn't seem to have fallen too far from the tree, to be honest. Grace Petrie is an LGBTQ+ activist and folksinging socialist who is living proof that the art of protest is in rude

health. And it needs to be, because shrewd, articulate, informed dissent is required now more than ever.

As a self-sufficient DIY artist, Petrie received minimal mainstream attention. Despite this, she managed to raise the full amount for her September 2018 album, *Queer As Folk*, within 24 hours of opening the Kickstarter campaign. She's collaborated with folk luminaries such as Peggy Seeger and has toured on various occasions with Billy Bragg. She also has a growing love of, and relationship with, Canada having returned for the past number of years playing the likes of Vancouver Folk Festival, Stan Rogers Folk Festival, and Skylight Festival.

"My music seems to go down well there," she told me. "It seems to translate well."

Her first political song, *Farewell To Welfare*, was born in 2010 after the Tory-led Conservative-Lib Dem coalition came to power and austerity became fiscal policy.

"It was a direct result of Theresa May," Petrie explained. May, the then Home Secretary, "had used her platform to vote against progressive legislation for LGBT people at every opportunity she had been given... So, I wrote *Farewell To Welfare* in this kind of enraged frenzy."

"And we've got a recession to beat / Let's put more money into the monarchy and a millionaire into Downing Street / And someone's got to foot the bill / Let's start with the disabled and the mentally ill."

On behalf of those who were feeling sidelined and voiceless, *Farewell To Welfare* was kicking a few tables over, and Petrie found herself catapulted into the politically engaged protest scene of austerity Britain.

"I started attending rallies, demos, and marches. Meeting a load of activists and getting more involved in campaigns. Learning more about it. And that inspired writing about it more. So it became quite a self-inspiring thing, a self-fulfilling thing."

Of course, where there is protest, there is folk. Or as Petrie puts it, "[Folk music] was the conduit of the people to comment on the times and the injustices that they lived in and I see absolutely no logical reason why that should only be reserved to sing about the Peasants' Revolt when we could sing about the food banks that are happening in the country right now."

Interestingly, Petrie was a latecomer to the folk scene, discovering it later in her twenties. She's a signed-up member now, revelling in "the wealth of traditional grounding in the music, the tunes and songs."

Indeed, folk has become so key in the musical world of Grace Petrie that she started a folk club in Leicester.

"Halfway with the intention of trying to have specifically an explicit political space," she explained. "And I also quite wanted to encourage some younger people to come, and some people who maybe are not familiar with the folk scene, because I also think it can be a little bit like a secret society if you're not involved in it."

But Petrie is opinionated and not everyone likes that. Described by some as the female Billy Bragg, she is also considered by some others to be "in your face," and "too abrasive." Here is a woman who is vocal about her sexuality, who owns her place onstage, and is not asking permission before she opens her mouth.

"I have had experiences where some folk audiences in the U.K. have responded quite badly to my outspoken political agenda," she explained. "I think it's offensive to some people to have an openly gay and unapologetically butch lesbian onstage who is unafraid to speak her mind."

Billy Bragg obviously doesn't find her too abrasive. A week after she met him at a gig and thrust one of her early home-recorded CDs into his hand, ("I could barely speak because I was so starstruck"), Bragg sent her an email asking if she'd, "like to do some songs at Glastonbury." They have gone on to work together on numerous occasions in the years since.

"You know, honestly, I think everything that has happened in my career I can in some way trace back to that gig in Glastonbury. That was really the springboard into so many things and I'm still very grateful to Billy for that. It was an amazing opportunity."

And Grace Petrie has never balked at grasping that opportunity. For *Queer As Folk*, her latest album of personal, political, folk-based songs, she has enlisted the help of acclaimed artists including Nancy Kerr, Miranda Sykes, and Hannah James. She's proud of the results.

"The arrangements, I think, bring the songs long years ahead of where they were."

The album is evocative and shifting, hard-hitting, love-struck, heart-broke, and angry. It offers original material by Petrie, some new but also re-energized versions of previously recorded favourites, (including *Farewell To Welfare*). She also reworks, and even updates, a number of traditional folk songs.

Take, for example, *A Young Woman's Tale*, her own a cappella revision of Ian Campbell's *Old Man's Tale*. And her tender, simple rendition of Richard Thompson's *Beeswing* is beautiful.

With a tour planned as support for Frank Turner next year, and full intention to return to Canada, keep an eye on Grace Petrie's website to catch her live: www.gracepetrie.com



And an other thing ...

For online tickets, full lineup and more info visit: coldsnapfestival.com

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Friday January 25th, 2014 Celebrate Our North!

Cranbrook Room, Ramada Hotel

Khasan Mens Drummers (British Columbia)

Ryan McNally Trio (Okanagan, BC)

The Jerry Cans (Okanagan, BC)

Saturday January 26th, 2014 Folk Rockin' it at The Ballroom Part II

Cranbrook Room, Ramada Hotel

Salvatore Hank (Okanagan BC)

Big Little Lions (Okanagan, BC)

Clifford Brood (Okanagan, BC)

Sunday January 27th, 2014 Celebrate for a While!

Prince George Playhouse - Evening Show

Barlene Shattford & Curtis Abner (Prince George, BC)

Kat Dancer (Okanagan, BC)

Ray Davis (Okanagan, BC)

Monday January 28th, 2014 Chase Away the Blues

Prince George Playhouse - Evening Show

Barlene Shattford & Curtis Abner (Prince George, BC)

Kat Dancer (Okanagan, BC)

Ray Davis (Okanagan, BC)

Tuesday January 29th, 2014 Coldsnap Goes Classical

Prince George Playhouse

PGSO Chamber Orchestra (Prince George, BC)

Amir Amir and Richard Moody (Okanagan, BC)

The Atlantic String Machine (Okanagan, BC)

Thursday January 30th, 2014 Leave it to the Ladies

Prince George Playhouse

Barlene Shattford & Curtis Abner (Prince George, BC)

Celeste Cardinal Trio (Okanagan, BC)

Rose Lightfoot (Okanagan, BC)

Friday February 1st, 2014 Dance it up a Storm!

Cranbrook Room, Ramada Hotel

OCPPG Special Guest (Okanagan, BC)

E.T.C. (Okanagan, BC)

L.S. (Okanagan, BC)

Saturday February 2nd, 2014 Coldsnap Turns up the Heat!

Cranbrook Room, Ramada Hotel

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Red Haven (Okanagan, BC)

Koko Town (Okanagan, BC)

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Eric Bibb

The hypnotic rhythms of West Africa filter through American folk and blues on his epic new release.

By Roger Levesque

Griot is a West African term of some weight, denoting a storyteller or musician of a tribal lineage that often goes back generations. The title of Eric Bibb's uplifting new double-album *Global Griot* suggests that this repository of human truths has now, finally, discovered himself in the mirror.

Much of Bibb's past work hinted at his wider vision, especially his brilliant 2017 album *Migration Blues* (garnering a Grammy nomination, sadly losing to The Rolling Stones in a trad' blues category). *Global Griot* takes that vision a step farther, showing what a multifaceted artist he is.

"It's the culmination of my experiences on this journey," he allows. "When my friend Solo Cissokho first told me that he sees me as a griot, that I embody those elements—story-

telling, singing, oral history—I realized that had happened in an unplanned, organic way. Understanding the history that I'm attached to and how that relates to the big picture is what I've pursued all my life, really."

Taking a spark of inspiration from his late father, folksinger/activist Leon Bibb, he grew up amidst some of the greatest folk and blues stars of the 1960s. After Dylan famously advised him to "keep it simple", this New York native spent much of his career honing his ear for American folk blues. At 67, he's still tracing the African roots underlying that American tradition, trying to bridge those two continents, even as he's made his home base in Europe for most of his adult life.

All that and more comes through in the wonderfully eclectic set that is *Global Griot*, from its recurring West African grooves to shades of blues, gospel, urbane soul, jazz, and funk flavours, and acoustic and electric textures that are accessible and experimental. Senegalese kora virtuoso Solo Cissokho is a key conspirator on 21-string West African harp, adding a beautiful lift to many tracks, but there's invention around every corner of this epic release.

Recorded in 12 studios over six countries, it also features Mali guitar star Habib Koite,

Sweden's versatile Jesper Nordenstrom on keys and Ale Moller on trumpet, legendary Jamaican singer Ken Boothe, Canadian soul-blues great Harrison Kennedy, San Francisco's choir queen Linda Tillery, and Montreal string ace Michael Jerome Browne among others, a big cast spread over 24 tunes.

Bibb says the breadth of the album came about more by chance and less by any grand design.

"It evolved into something that made wonderful sense to my artistic soul, an opportunity to pull together some of my pet sounds and biggest inspirations starting with Mandinka kora music from Solo Cissokho. It became apparent that this was an opportunity to spread the message of a global perspective. Once I zoomed in on this idea things just kept coming to me and I just kept going."

Lyrically, *Global Griot* offers equal parts dark and light, gentle and barbed. Fans of social commentary will find some of Bibb's most pointed songs ever, starting with the funky *Whereza Money At*, addressing corruption and the gap between rich and poor. Then there's the first video single, *What's He Gonna Say Today*, about the guy in the White House, a song that Bibb admits has already brought some flak.

"I had to write that song because I was so personally and collectively outraged by what I was hearing on a daily basis, and it's only gotten crazier. But I made a conscious decision not to perform it live because I'm not interested in joining his divisive bandwagon. My mission is to unite."

That mission surfaces in the opening song *Gathering Of The Tribes*, and if there's any over-arching theme behind the journey that is *Global Griot* it's connectedness.

The real proof of Bibb's musical ancestry came out in a solo concert set I caught at St. Albert's lovely Arden Theatre the night before our interview. In the deceptively simple, propelling riffs, stark accents, and hypnotic, modal patterns he pulled out of his acoustic guitars the rhythms of West Africa filtered through the blues to lend a profound underpinning to many songs.

Had it always been this way, I wondered?

"It hasn't always been there in this way," he explains, "but when I decided to make blues the foundation of what I do, especially onstage, I became fascinated with the self-contained one-man band, the guy or gal who could make a complete statement with an accompaniment that had its own integrity as a composition, people like Blind Willie Johnson."

Bibb underlines that he loves playing with others and loves writing and covering other styles, especially ballads, but somewhere along the way he realized he had to find a way of performing solo that kept it interesting for himself and the audience.

"That modal blues thing was something I could do effectively and make the foundation of a lot of songs. When Habib Koite and I first met and jammed, he picked up on it right away. He said, 'When I hear your music I hear my culture'."

Their meeting sparked a friendship and spawned the 2012 disc *Brothers In Bamako*.

That same solo strength makes playing with others on projects such as *Global Griot* even more fun.

"It's like suddenly having two dozen more colours on your palette, and it makes them more comfortable, too, because I know in advance that whatever they do will work with that modal musical language. I'll play and get them to play what they hear on top of that. I'm not really an improviser. I prefer to keep a steady constant going on and let my guests do the improvising."

After living in Sweden for many years, and in England, France, and Finland, Bibb has been back in Sweden again about five years now, in

a rural setting outside Stockholm with his wife, Ulrika. She's a singer in her own right and a guest on his recent albums (check their new collaboration *Pray Sing Love*, a celebration of love, companionship, and marriage). They have five grown children, several very involved in the performing arts.

He still enjoys family connections in North America and takes two or three tours of the U.S. and Canada each year but spends most of his time in Europe and the U.K. It's inevitable that such a life gave him an expanded world view but he seems to have a great appreciation for his Christian faith, too, a remnant of his experience with spirituals and gospel songs. To condense an in-depth explanation:

"It's always been there but in a way that's about sharing," he explains. "And I'm not exclusively Christian. I see a lot of crossover."

Ultimately, honesty might be the central element of Bibb's art.

"I decided all I needed to do was figure out who I was. I don't feel like I have a musical act. I'm not a flashy instrumentalist or vocalist. What I've focused on is being myself onstage and sharing what I've experienced and learned. To get paid for being who you are is a huge blessing."

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Shakura S'Aida

This award-winning singer covers every gritty, street-smart, in-your-face shade of the blues. By Roger Levesque

Every now and then you run into people who have no time for the blues. They may get the blues but they don't take time for the music. I feel sorry for them, because they miss out on artists such as Shakura S'Aida.

That's "Shack-ooo-ra Sigh-ee-da" (translation, "thank you, God").

What a wonderful character this woman is.

She's best known as a blues singer but is so much more than that. Or perhaps it's best to say she's every shade of blues singer, from gritty, street-smart blues, to hip in-the-pocket funky

soul blues, to anthemic, in-your-face rocking blues, to bittersweet wanna-be-loved jazzy blues, to ancestral threads of Africa blues. She's all that and then some.

And more than just a singer for that matter. Over the past 30 years or so, parallel to her musical career, S'Aida has chalked up a considerable list of theatre, film, and television credits in the process of becoming one of Canada's performing arts treasures.

International from the start. Brooklyn-born, she's the child of an American mother and Swiss father, raised in Zurich, Switzerland, for several years, and then in Toronto from age nine. She speaks French, German, Swiss-German, and some Italian along with English.

Oh, she's made time for motherhood, too, (you've got to figure her two children were blues fans before they were born), and has identified with Buddhism since the mid-'90s.

S'Aida was a treat to witness onstage and

then to chat with in a tent at the Edmonton Folk Music Festival last August.

I wondered, was there ever a time she wasn't pursuing the arts?

"I think I always sang, in the church choir and in high school. But I was an actor, too. I started doing mime in Grade 9 and 10, and got into theatre arts, studying monologues."

She read a mix of Shakespeare and black authors and playwrights such as Lorraine Hansberry, and wanted to be an actor by the time she finished high school. But even earlier, a communal stack of 45-rpm singles at her grandmother's house introduced her to Aretha Franklin, Etta James, The Supremes, Bill Withers, Otis Redding, and more.

"We moved around a lot so music was my sanity, the one thing I had that no one could take away from me no matter where we moved. Once I discovered it, I was hungry for it."

A favourite teacher told her to go to a per-

forming arts school to become a singer.

"I said, 'I want to be an actor.' She said, 'You'll always be an actor but you need to sing'."

But a year in music school only left her feeling pigeonholed. A more meaningful option presented itself in jams in the clubs of downtown Toronto and before long she was adopted by some of the city's heaviest black musicians, artists such as Jackie Washington and Salome Bey.

Discovering musical theatre was another revelation.

"How much better could you get? You get theatre and music. It was incredible."

• • •

Flash forward to the 1980s and 1990s, when S'Aida, married with kids, was alternating between singing in clubs, some theatre and performance art, but without a genre or any original songs. After separating from her husband, she was left to raise an eight-year-old and a one-year-old on her own.

"That kind of shut everything down," she admits, "but after seven years as a single mom, doing everything in management but singing, I decided I wanted to try singing again."

She borrowed money to make her first CD, the 2008 release *Blueprint*, a survey of 1940s and '50s tunes made famous by the likes of Big Maybelle, Big Mama Thornton, and Memphis Mini, with two original tracks.

"Everyone in the industry told me nothing would happen but that I would have a calling card. It was a struggle to find people but my experience gave me confidence to try."

Over her first two dates, at Toronto's Beaches Jazz Fest and the Montreal Jazz Festival, she sold nearly 400 albums, and onstage at Montreal she had an unforgettable epiphany:

"This wave of energy came up from the audience almost in slow motion. I inhaled it and exhaled, and it kept coming back in circles, and I suddenly knew, 'This is what I'm supposed to be doing'."

Still, gigs were sparse. Until she made it to the 2008 International Blues Challenge in Memphis.

"That changed my life."

At the IBC, S'Aida made first runner-up out of more than 100 acts from around the world. Networking was helpful, too. In the decade since, she's gone from struggling to book shows to performing in more than 25 countries.

Along the way, S'Aida met and cemented a working friendship with guitarist Donna Grantis, who played an essential role in the singer's next two albums. After meeting every Tuesday afternoon over tea, their first co-writes showed up on *Brown Sugar* in 2010.

"I might get in trouble for saying this—the blues scene is a white man's world. It's hard for African-American artists to get booked."

— Shakura S'Aida

But her key achievement in the recording studio so far was the double-disc set S'Aida released in 2012 on the Electro-Fi label titled *Time...*. The package looks planned out, with one disc dubbed *Time to Rock My Soul...* and the other *Time for the Blues...*, "like two sides of an LP" she explains, but the process was often more intuitive.

"I've tried to stay true to the art. So I might come up with a bass line in the shower, I sing that into my recorder, and then find somebody who makes it this wicked, funky bass line, and other people add to that. When we're done, I need it to sound like it all came from the same place."

Despite stylistic contrasts between discs, most tracks used the same core band, Grantis on guitar, Roger Williams on bass, Tony Rabalao or Shamakah Ali on drums, and Lance Anderson on keyboards, with extra guests here and there on guitars, cello, or horns. Add cameos from soul man Harrison Kennedy and Kenny (Blues-Boss) Wayne. *Time...* will only leave you wanting more.

By the time of its release, S'Aida was touring Europe at least once a year, something that has only intensified with regular trips to France,

Germany, Italy, and Morocco.

"I'm well known now in Europe, and our expertise in the art form is more respected there. In Germany and Scandinavia, they like the rock side. In France, Italy, and Switzerland, they like more traditional blues. In the United States right now—and I might get in trouble for saying this—the blues scene is a white man's world. It's hard for African-American artists to get booked. So I spend time in Europe or at folk festivals in Canada."

By now she has a long list of award nominations and one Maple Blues win for 2010 Female Vocalist of the Year. Her acting credits are longer yet with recent appearances on *Schitt's Creek* and *Titans*.

Recent collaborations include a developing musical friendship with Keb' Mo' and plans for a new album with Lance Anderson producing.

"I went down to Martinique for a month. Stories and messages came out of me that I had never thought of writing about before."

Dual careers keep S'Aida busier than ever, wishing she had more time for each of them. And one career rubs off on the other.

"Acting informs my musical performances a lot, and used to inform it a lot more before I was at peace with myself and being more in the moment. I was incredibly shy onstage so I used to put a persona on to be strong. Now, because I've grown more, it allows me to explore the story. I'm less of a character, more authentic, able to feel the story more."



You put your right leg out and you shake it all about ...



John Wort Hannam

He stripped his songs to the bones and overcame depression to create a magical new disc.

By Jackie Bell

Take an accomplished but struggling songwriter to the Banff Centre, offer him a residency, surround him with creative colleagues and mentors, and then listen to the resulting magic. In this case, the magic is John Wort Hannam's latest release, *Acrea of Elbow Room*. The magic is the sound of an artist digging deep to discover new melodic

and lyrical inspiration.

A couple of years ago, Hannam attended an intensive songwriter program that offered one-to-one sessions with expert musical faculty, group sessions with peers, and time to write. All songs on *Acrea of Elbow Room* were born at the Banff Centre. Hannam credits artistic director Kevin Welch with helping him find a new lyrical voice by stripping his songs to the bones.

"[Welch] really held my feet to the fire about that whole 'less is more' thing. We've all heard that phrase and it's easy to say you believe in it but it's way harder to practice and adhere to it.

"For the last 18 years," Hannam says, "I've been trying to find the right words and figure out how to put those words together in just the

right combination so that when people hear them, they feel something. I think that's all any of us really want, to feel something deeply. We want our core shaken, our bones to ache, and our hearts to quiver."

Hannam isn't afraid to get personal, to acknowledge his own sorrows and hopes, or to address difficult contemporary problems.

"I'm in a place where I want a song to punch me square in the face or I'm not going to waste my time writing it," he says.

For instance, the initial inspiration for the song *Only Love* was the image of Alan Kurdi, the three-year-old refugee who drowned in the Mediterranean as his family attempted to flee Syria. But the picture of a dead child washed up on a beach was one of a few horrific scenes

that sparked Hannam to write.

"Forty men dressed in black with long knives standing behind 40 men kneeling in orange jumpsuits somewhere on a Libyan beach. So much fear. Where is the empathy and compassion?" he asks. "I remember thinking to myself, 'Only love can save us now.' I wrote half a song around that phrase. I wrote the rest of the song the night of the Las Vegas country music festival shooting rampage.

"If there's anything I've learned it's that we, as humans—despite our skin colour, politics, religion, or how we identify—have way more in common than not. We all want to figure out our purpose in this life, we all want to feel safe, and we all want to love and be loved."

Hannam describes *Key of D Minor* as the most personal song he's written. "I struggled when my son was born. I loved him more than anything but I resented my own heart for wanting to be in two different places."

The push and pull of life on the road versus being with family eventually plunged Hannam to devastating emotional lows.

"I ended up in emergency on occasion because of my inability to sleep due to anxiety and depression. Mental illness manifested itself in my singing voice and it was difficult and, at times, painfully embarrassing to stand onstage

and sing with a voice that was weakened with all that I couldn't seem to process in my head. As I found some balance and made better choices, I began to come out of it and my voice came back."

Time in Banff amongst peers and mentors was reinvigorating.

"Something changed in me at that residency. I learned a new way to write. Was it the faculty? Was it having time to devote to my craft after years of struggling with both home and road life? Was it being surrounded by so many creative people? It was probably all of the above," he says. "All I know is that I have a new outlook on songs. I have found the joy in playing again. I feel like I'm writing the best songs of my life and I can't wait to write more. I can also tell you unequivocally that I haven't said that in years."

Hannam invited his touring band to record the album at the Banff Centre. Band members Jason Valleau (upright bass), Jon May (drums), and Stephen Fletcher (keys) add a killer complement to the album and live show.

"I knew I wanted to make a record that the four of us could duplicate live onstage. So that meant not getting carried away in the studio with production—no layering of guest artists, playing instruments that the four core members

of the band could not play."

Before entering the recording studio, the band spent eight days at the Centre holed up in a rehearsal space, tearing apart and reassembling songs, trying different tempos, keys, and arrangements. By dismantling and rebuilding songs, Hannam feels they were able to work out glitches before the tape rolled.

"The songs on the record are quite different from each other," he says, "but there is a sonic consistency that runs through the recording due to having only the four core players performing on each song."

There are a few exceptions to the album's band-only rule, including violinist Jesse Zubot, who happened to stick his head around the studio door.

"I wasn't about to miss an opportunity," Hannam says, "so I asked him to play on the last 16 bars of *Key of D Minor*."

Roots musician Emily Triggs sings beautifully on the duet *The Quiet Life*, and the Fleetwood Bawden Grade 5 Choir adds poignant, sweet hope to *Only Love*. T. Buckley, also a Banff Centre attendee, helped Hannam finish up *Wild Young Things* and *Old Flame*.

It's the old Banff magic. *Acres of Elbow Room* is worth a serious listen.

Natalie MacMaster & Donnell Leahy



- Dec 01 – **Edmonton, AB** – Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
- Dec 02 – **Calgary, AB** – Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium
- Dec 03 – **Medicine Hat, AB** – Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre
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- Dec 07 – **Winkler, MB** – PW Enns Centennial Hall
- Dec 08 – **Thunder Bay, ON** – Thunder Bay Community Auditorium
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- Dec 11/12 – **St. Catharines, ON** – FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre
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- Dec 13 – **Brockville, ON** – Brockville Arts Centre
- Dec 15 – **Brampton, ON** – Rose Theatre
- Dec 16 – **Ottawa, ON** – National Arts Centre
- Dec 19 – **Kitchener, ON** – Centre in the Square
- Dec 20 – **Toronto, ON** – Roy Thomson Hall
- Dec 21/22 – **Peterborough, ON** – Showplace Performance Centre

A CELTIC FAMILY CHRISTMAS

A Celtic Family Christmas 2018 Concert Tour



The storied, global folk organisation celebrates its 30th anniversary in Montreal in February.

By Mike Regenstreif

Folksinger John McCutcheon once described a Folk Alliance International conference as “part trade show, part class reunion, part desperate audition”—about as good a description as anyone might come up with in fewer than 10 words.

Folk Alliance International—the umbrella organization encompassing both organizations and individuals involved in the performance, promotion, and preservation of folk music in all of its diverse genres—will celebrate its 30th anniversary when several thousand folks gather Feb. 13-17 at the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal for the 2019 edition of the conference.

Thousands of folkies will renew old friendships and create new ones, make or renew contacts that will lead to new opportunities in the coming year or perhaps years from now, and make and/or listen to a lot of great music in official showcases, in late-night guerrilla showcases, and in song circles and jams in hotel rooms, lobbies, elevators, and stairwells. There will also be many panel discussions, workshops, peer group meetings, and mento-

ring sessions. Sleep will be at a premium for most folks over the five days.

Folk Alliance International has come a long way since January 1989 when about 130 artists and folk music activists gathered for a retreat in Malibu, CA, at the behest of Elaine and Clark Weissman, the forces behind the California Traditional Music Society. The Weissmans had spent years talking to people all over North America about the need for some sort of folk music trade organization, and that retreat in Malibu essentially launched what was originally known as the North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance.

In Malibu, the gathering struck a steering committee and set five ambitious goals:

1. To increase understanding of the rich variety, artistic value, cultural, and historical significance, and continuing relevance, of folk music and dance among educators, media, and the general public. (Education)
2. To provide a bridge to and from folk music and dance organizations and needed resources, and to help those organizations link with the constituencies. (Networking)
3. To influence decision makers and resource providers on the national, state, provincial, and local levels, ensuring the growth of folk music and dance. (Advocacy)
4. To support and encourage the development of new and existing grassroots folk music and dance organizations. (Field Development)
5. To strengthen the effectiveness of folk

music and dance organizations by providing professional development opportunities. (Professional Development).

As folksinger and author Scott Alarik notes in a Folk Alliance history he prepared, “At the time, it felt like an impossibly vast mission, raising more questions than it answered, identifying more conflicts than it resolved. In 2018, it sounds exactly like a 30-year-old organization called Folk Alliance International.”

A year later, the fledgling Folk Alliance met for a conference in Philadelphia. It was attended by 220 people and included the first 18 official showcases (guerrilla showcases hadn’t yet been “invented”)—statistics that seem tiny compared to the thousands who now attend the conference and the hundreds upon hundreds of official and guerrilla showcases that almost seem to folk around the clock.

While attendance at Folk Alliance conferences was measured in the hundreds for the first few years, attendance surpassed 1,000 by 1995 and 2,000 by 2003. By 2017, it was pushing close to 3,000—attracting artists and activists ranging from teenagers to music veterans over 90.

And as the conference grew, it always attracted many more artists than could possibly perform in the official showcases that made their debut in Philadelphia in 1990. The official showcase artists are chosen by a jury and their performances take place in hotel ballrooms and large meeting rooms with a large stage and pro-



fessional-quality sound and lighting systems.

Then there are the private or unofficial showcases—the guerrilla showcases—that take place in hotel suites with audiences of 15 or 20 people and small rooms that might accommodate five or 10 at most. There are literally hundreds and hundreds of guerrilla showcases that begin when the official showcases are done for the evening and last until close to breakfast time. Pick a time, say midnight, and there is probably a choice of 50 or more shows to pull you in. Nobody will ever get to see everything.

Among the daytime activities at a Folk Alliance conference are myriad panel discussions and peer group meetings that touch on virtually all aspects of the folk music experience—from practical workshops for artists, agents, or folk-radio hosts to academic presentations on folklore or historically important artists.

Something folkies have always known, as The Weavers sang in their version of *When the Saints Go Marching In*, is that we stand on the shoulders of those who came before. Early on, Folk Alliance recognized this and established the Elaine Weissman Lifetime Achievement Awards with three categories: Living Artist, Legacy Artist (for artists who are now deceased), and Business/Academic (which honours non-performers).

The Lifetime Awards presentation has long been one of the most popular parts of the conference and a number of other awards have been added over the years.

Now there is the International Folk Awards gala each year that also includes the Spirit of Folk Awards, which honour individuals or organizations whose folk music work involves

leadership and community building; People's Voice, an award for artists who embrace "social and political commentary in their creative work and public careers"; Clearwater, an award for festivals that prioritize "environmental stewardship" and show "public leadership in sustainable event production"; the Folk DJ Hall of Fame, for radio hosts "who have made an outstanding contribution to the preservation, promotion, and presentation of folk music, and who have demonstrated and inspired leadership in the broadcast field"; and album, song, and artist of the year.

From the first gatherings in Malibu and Philadelphia in 1989 and '90, respectively, until 2006, the annual conference was held in a different North American city each year, with stops in Chicago, Calgary, Tucson, Boston, Portland (OR), Washington, Toronto, Memphis, Albuquerque, Cleveland, Vancouver, Jacksonville, Nashville, San Diego, Montreal, and Austin. Then there was a six-year run in Memphis from 2007 to 2012, a return to Toronto in 2013, and a five-year run in Kansas City from 2014 to 2018.

The organization's name change from the North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance to Folk Alliance International was made in 2003, in recognition of the increasingly international nature of the folk music world.

While the big annual conference is Folk Alliance's highest profile activity, the organization, which is run by a volunteer board of directors and a small professional staff, is involved in many other activities pertaining to the promotion of folk music and its related genres.

Among its most important tasks is advocacy work that has impacted such areas as performing rights royalties, travelling with musical instruments, international touring, support for the arts, and much more.

The current mission statement of Folk Alliance International is "to serve, strengthen, and engage the global folk music community through preservation, presentation, and promotion."

None of the 130 people who gathered in Malibu 30 years ago to launch Folk Alliance had any idea that the organization and the annual conference would grow and evolve to the extent that it has. What is indisputable, though, is the crucial role that Folk Alliance International now plays in the lives of virtually every individual and organization—professional and amateur—involved in the performance, presentation, preservation, and promotion of folk music.

"The future of folk is healthier than ever, and as we step into our fourth decade the Canadian edition will proudly celebrate many new international partnerships, strategic efforts to diversity, and genuine values-based commitments to inclusivity," says Aengus Finnan, executive director of Folk Alliance International—the first Canadian to fulfil that role.

Mike Regenstreif has been involved in the folk music scene for almost five decades. He hosts folk music programs on CKCU in Ottawa and was the first Canadian inducted into Folk Alliance International's Folk DJ Hall of Fame. His blog, *Folk Roots/Folk Branches*, can be found at <https://frfb.blogspot.com>.



Braden Gates

He fancies following in the footsteps of John Hartford, making goofy, old-time fiddle tunes.

By Levi Gogerla

Coming from small-town Fort Saskatchewan, AB, Braden Gates found himself writing songs and taking in music at an early age. From classic rock anthems from the likes of Thin Lizzy as he laced up his skates as a hockey-playing youngster to the instrumental music passed down from his father, storytelling and songwriting has always been paramount in Gates's life.

His new album, *Pictures of Us*, has two-time winner of the Alberta fiddle championship

digging deep into the inner echelon of folk music sensibility with nuanced lyricism far beyond his age, 26, and a greasier fiddle style he's learned through years of dedication paying homage to Canadian greats such as Calvin Vollrath and Don Messer.

Pictures of Us is rooted in the everyday trials and tribulations of city life, and the keen observations of a writer deep in thought, set to folk-guitar twang.

"For whatever reason, I was drawn to the songwriting aspect," Gates says. "Being able to tell a story, turning a phrase, pairing that music with that intuition. My performance is not all fiddle or all guitar, it's a mix of a bunch of stuff and the stories I want to tell."

The place you're in and where you're from are important to Gates's lyricism and songwriting style. As he listens to and writes music, he likes to look at finding those places from the

writer's or a literary perspective.

"I've always thought it was important to write about where you are in life. I don't write songs about things I haven't experienced or places I've never been... Those songs are good, too, but I find writing about what I've experienced personally makes the song more interesting," Gates says.

Roots music has always been ingrained in Gates's life. From an early age, his parents encouraged him to pick up the fiddle. But it was the chance meeting with James Blunt on the cover of an *Acoustic Guitar* magazine when he was 14 that really got the ball rolling and Gates began thinking of taking music seriously.

"I was about 14 and I found an *Acoustic Guitar* magazine, and James Blunt was on the cover with a beautiful Gibson; I was intrigued by that picture," Gates says. "He was just a guy from the U.K., he was in the army, he played

acoustic guitar. I listened to *Back to Bedlam*, like, so many times and I thought I could write songs like James Blunt. And it sounds like a joke because people like to make fun of James Blunt but I have a few of those weird influences that got the ball rolling—Jack Johnson's *Curious George* soundtracks is another one."

A lot of the songs on *Pictures of Us* showcase a full band, and while he's proud of the album he doesn't try to emulate the record when he's playing live. He often likes stripped-down sets where he can banter a bit with the crowd.

All music is a form of storytelling. Since folk music is a little bit more laid back, Gates believes you might be able to present the story a little more concretely, giving the listener time to interpret and see themselves in the music.

"I'm still sort of drawn to the down-and-out feeling," Gates says. "Everyday life, trying to find meaning in what happens to everybody. I defiantly like to find meaning in the mundane. That's what makes it interesting, writing songs about things that don't give you a lot. Trying to place your listener in the song is important, too. A song isn't complete until it's heard, and if someone hears themselves in a song, it can be a powerful experience."

Gates's poetic writing is often sentimental. A lot of his recent work has been self-reflective, and involved a lot of internalizing when he set about writing a song. Now he thinks he's ready to play fiddle and dance, and maybe provide his listeners with a bit of joy.

"I want to make a record like John Hartford's *Mark Twang*. I'd really like to get into making some weirder songs, fiddle and dance songs, zany songs, that are old timey and goofy," Gates says. "Music that's not informed by drama or destruction."

Gates usually writes for himself. If he writes songs for people, he doesn't go to them and say he's writing a song about them. It's a process he finds a little awkward sometimes, exposing elements of yourselves and others in art, and wondering if you're doing it justice. Gates believes that the better you get at your craft the less of yourself or details you need to reveal. When he started out it was all instinct. As he's kept writing and honing his craft, he's been able to better hide himself.

"I've been writing this song called *Bonnie's Lounge*, about the characters I see for example—and sometimes I think to myself, 'Is it OK to be trying to put them to song? Is it OK for me to put my own spin on things? Is it a little skewed with how it is in reality or an accurate representation?'. I would never go up to a person and say, 'I wrote this for you,' but sometimes there is the inclination that I'm writing it for 'you'. That's not why I do it, so why do I do it? I don't know...maybe it's just to give a moment a little more meaning so I don't go crazy."

Writing music and creating music has really been about creating purpose in Gates's life. He's interested in starting a band called Bean Sneaker—it's a strange idea in its approach to songwriting, and philosophy.

"Say someone has a jar of beans, like lima beans or jelly beans or something, that you really wanted and they were guarding it with their lives. And they don't let you get any beans no matter how much you might want them. So one wonders how would you get beans? You'd have to, like, sneak around the person. You've got to be a Bean Sneaker," Gates muses.

"The last record and production kinda just happened whereas Bean Sneaker is going to be more rhythmic, with more slide and melody. I was so caught up in lyrics and words and there was so much pressure put on it.

"At the end of the day, I guess it doesn't really matter. Songs don't save the world, songs are songs. I've been finding much more joy in fiddling and dancing. When I find someone I connect with musically, I'm actively building a team of Bean Sneakers."

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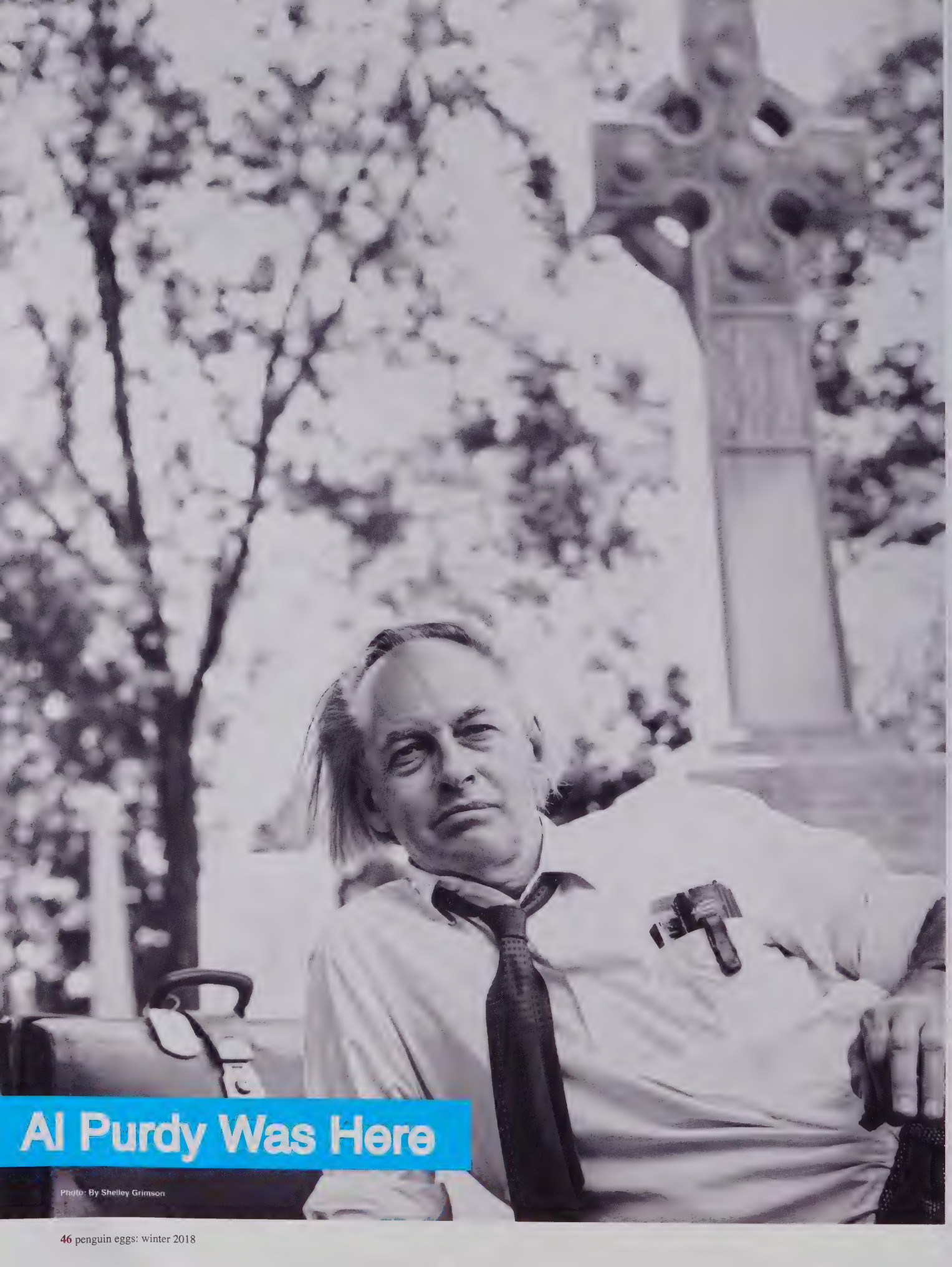
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Al Purdy Was Here

Photo: By Shelley Grimson

The likes of Bruce Cockburn and Sarah Harmer pay tribute to the late Canadian poet.

By Pat Langston

Odds are you know the name Al Purdy. You may even have heard about his A-frame cabin in Ameliasburgh, ON. That's where the two-time recipient of the Governor General's Award and other honours lived with his wife, Eurithe, writing reams of poetry while presiding over a mid-20th-century mecca for trailblazers of CanLit such as Michael Ondaatje and Margaret Atwood.

However, odds are also good that you've never actually read Purdy's poetry. Or, if you have, you couldn't quote a line to save your life.

Not to worry. You're in good company, including that of Bruce Cockburn, Sarah Harmer, and Jason Collett. None of them knew much about Purdy before they, along with others, signed on to *Al Purdy Was Here*, Brian D. Johnson's nuanced 2015 documentary about the life of the rambunctious and contrarian poet, who died in 2000 at the age of 81. That sign-on included contributing to *The Al Purdy Songbook*, a kind of soundtrack from the film, albeit with changes and additions, which was recently released by Borealis Records.

The album—a must-have for any self-respecting poetry lover and admirer of good music—also features the likes of Gord Downie, Leonard Cohen, and Greg Keelor. Some of the artists, including Atwood, read Purdy poems. Some have transformed a poem into a song. Still others have fashioned their own songs inspired by one or more Purdy pieces.

“One reason I thought a songbook would work was because singer/songwriters look up to poets and many see themselves as poets,” says filmmaker Johnson. “I told the musicians, ‘There are no limits. Do whatever you like’.”

Johnson launched the film and the songbook simultaneously. The latter has taken longer to come to fruition, due to music funding.

Both had their genesis when Johnson helped out at a 2013 benefit show in Toronto to restore the A-frame, which Purdy and his wife built themselves in 1957 from scrap materials but which had fallen into disrepair.

Johnson says he'd known little about Purdy before the benefit but quickly fell under the poetry's spell.

“I was impressed by how boundless it was; it felt a lot like the country. It was sprawling like he was, epic without being grandiose or

self-aggrandizing.”

Johnson's contribution to that benefit—a montage of old film and TV clips of the poet and a last-minute decision to film the event—soon morphed into the idea for both a songbook to support the A-frame restoration project and a full documentary.

The A-frame restoration has proven successful, with the cabin now a creative retreat for writers of a new generation.

That idea of a retreat helped convince Sarah Harmer to climb aboard the film and songbook with *Just Get Here*. Incorporating lines from a Purdy poem, it's a sweet, yearning ballad that's both about the cabin and about anyplace that's precious because it nurtures creativity.

“I'm a bit of a fan of the past and old stories and old places,” she says. “It's great that this has a collective of writers and a vision for the future.”

Harmer has never visited Purdy's cabin, but “I drove past it. It's nicely tucked away.”

Harmer, like other musicians on the album, was brought on stream by Collett, the album's co-producer with Johnson. Collett also performs *A Sensitive Man*, blending his own lyrics with material from Purdy in a portrait of the poet as a brawling, beer-bellied guy with a hunger to understand his country that's as immense as the land itself.

Collett says the variety of artists on the album reflects “the depth, the reach, the reverberation of (Purdy's) body of work.”

The musician also notes that the poet—a high school dropout who rode the rails during the Depression and worked in mattress factories—wrote a lot of dreck until, in middle age, he finally hit his stride.

“What an inspiring story for an artist, this guy finally finding his voice. Toiling away in obscurity but toiling away nonetheless—often I think that's reflective of Canadian artists.”

Johnson rounds out that portrait of Purdy as a Canadian artist by noting that his generation of poets, people like Cohen and others, were “rock stars” in the 1960s and represented a country discovering itself and its distinct culture.

He also underscores Purdy's complexity. Often overbearing and provocative, “he was kind of an asshole,” Johnson says. At the same time, when it came to the poetry it had taken him so long to master, “he was always teetering on the edge of failure in his own mind. Although he was a swaggering, brazen alpha male, he had a fundamental humility to him.”

Johnson never met Purdy but Doug Paisley did, twice. The Ontario musician, who performs the rail-riding-inspired *Transient* on the album, became a fan when he attended a

couple of mid-1990 poetry readings by Purdy at taverns in Peterborough, ON.

“He was wearing a big blazer and had a plastic shopping bag with books of poetry in it,” recalls Paisley. “It was incredibly informal but not in a calculated way.”

Paisley also describes Purdy's DIY poetry as an “antidote” to the academic approach to literature that he was experiencing at university.

Purdy, says the musician, “was a real talisman for me. It's a comfort knowing he existed and what he did.”

Unlike Paisley, Bruce Cockburn began reading Purdy only when he was approached to sing in the film. He calls reading *Beyond Remembering*, the collection of Purdy poems published in 2000, “a great discovery”.

On the album, Cockburn performs three Al Purdys, a driving tune that mixes lyrics by the poet and himself. He sings in a startlingly gruff voice unlike anything we've ever heard from the musician. “I had a picture of a homeless guy obsessed with Purdy's voice and he rants it on the street,” says Cockburn. “It's not supposed to be me.”

As Doug Paisley notes, Purdy has been an inspiration to other writers. Cockburn, who released the album *Bone on Bone* in 2017 after a multi-year hiatus from recording, can now count himself among that group. When asked to contribute to the film, he hadn't written a song in four years.

“I thought I was still a songwriter but I wasn't sure. I thought maybe this was a kickstarter to writing again. I got the song and I was very happy—it did kick off a bunch of new songs.”



Photo: By Shelley Grimson

The Devil's in the Details



The former busker, who placed Québécois music on the world's stages as spiritual leader of La Bottine Souriante, confronts a demon or two on his cheeky new disc, *Tentation* (*Temptation*). Words by Tony Montague.

The image on the cover of the Yves Lambert Trio's latest album *Tentation* [Temptation] is not a pretty one. It depicts the unfortunate Monsieur Lambert being grabbed on all sides by horned and bestial demons from the darkest Middle Ages, about to cudgel or tear him to pieces and carry him off to hell. Yet the long-bearded and bespectacled musician, sporting his hallmark chapeau, grins slyly back at the onlooker. What's behind that smiling insouciance, and the title?

"For me, hell is more fun than heaven," confesses the veteran accordionist and singer. "It's also a representation of having tamed my demons, my numerous demons. It means I've become used to living with them. My main temptations are the seven deadly sins—I think I have something of all of them."

"Temptations have harassed me ever since my tender childhood—like the temptation of the flesh," he confesses, from his home in rural Lanaudière, an hour north of Montreal. "In second grade at school I had desire for my teacher. And then, of course, there's drink and all the rest—to different degrees. I've had to tame them at every step, that's the challenge of life. Some people follow the path of sacrifice and contemplation and become ascetics. Whereas for me it's just the opposite. I've embraced life with a hunger and passion. My demons are still around me—and I'm still able to tame them."

On *Tentation*'s cover Lambert, with blasphemic cheek, has taken the place of St. Anthony, who was assailed by devils of temptation in the desert. Québécois traditional song and lore is particularly rich in such figures, and they appear on two of the album's 10 tracks—*Les Diables* and *V.I.P. pour l'enfer*.

"They're part of the folk imagination. I think it comes out of the confrontation with the clergy, over hundreds of years. It was inculcated from the Middle Ages in France, just as it was in England or in Switzerland, and all over the Judeo-Christian world. Fear of demons was always a tool, a weapon, to assimilate and convert the individual. But you can still love the Devil while being afraid of him."

The quasi-demonic Yves Lambert Trio—with violinist Tommy Gauthier and guitarist Olivier Rondeau—plays a varied mix of songs and sets of instrumental tunes, mostly traditional but some more contemporary in a similar vein. The sources of the music are in the main Québécois and French, but may include other cultures—from the Middle East to the Celtic diaspora and the Hispanic world. *Tentation* includes two reels from the playing of Cape Breton fiddler Andrea Beaton as well as the Irish airs of *Vent D'Irlande*. Lambert has a long acquaintance with music from elsewhere.

"My roots are in the folk revival of the early to mid-'70s—the same time as The Bothy Band and Planxty in Ireland, and here in Quebec groups like Barde and Le Rêve Du Diable". [The Devil's Dream—another nod to the gentleman in scarlet]. "I've been drawn to my homeland's music since I was young, and as a teenager I was crazy about rock, which took me as far in my tastes as Soft Machine, Frank Zappa, Sun Ra—free jazz, too, and John Coltrane, and led me to discover the real blues—Fred McDowell, Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee, John Lee Hooker and others. Also the Incredible String Band. I started listening to the use of violin in rock, like Captain Beefheart, and it lit a fuse in me. And so I came to Québécois music. The old American blues led me to discover the old Québécois blues, which is less melancholic, perhaps, and more happy. But you can hide a lot of sadness behind joy."

Another of Monsieur Lambert's early temptations was travel. In 1974, he hitchhiked from Montreal to Yellowknife and spent the otherwise-idle hours by the side of the road playing harmonica. In the towns, he busked for change.

"I realized that I felt good performing and it made people really happy. I've always felt like a bush musician with kamikaze tendencies. I played blues, and I had a banjo, too, though I didn't take to it. In 1975, I found myself at the St. Jean-Baptiste Day Celebrations in Montreal on the Mont Royal itself, spread out over five days. It was the year before the Parti Québécois was elected, and two million people came. The atmosphere was amazing. Cops were smoking grass with us."

Lambert plunged into the roots music of his insurgent homeland and the following year formed La Bottine Souriante with fellow enthusiasts André Marchand, Mario Forest, and Giles Cantin. He also picked up the accordion. "I loved practicing music, and still do. I was able to hear and learn from the greats in Quebec—Pitou Boudreault, Jean Carignan, Philippe Bruneau, Philippe Gagnon. At that time, there was an amazing connection between the young players and the old-timers. It was an attraction that wasn't just musical. It was very human, and quite unusual in cultural history. You also see it, of course, with all the British rock bands and the old U.S. bluesmen. Tradition is also know-how. We learned from the old guard the way the Stones learned from Howlin' Wolf."

Buoyed up by the increasing enthusiasm of the Québécois for their cultural roots and distinctive identity, La Bottine met with early success. But the defeat of the independence movement in the referendum of 1980 left the band foundering for new direction and drive. They began touring in the U.S. and found that their music could be taken to audiences in places like California which, at the time, had little idea of where and what Quebec was.

Through Les Nouvelles Sonorités Joliettines (New Sounds from Joliette), an offshoot and workshop group for La Bottine Souriante, Lambert explored and experimented with other musical genres, styles, and traditions—Jewish, Appalachian, South American. Late pianist Denis Fréchette and multi-instrumentalist Michel Bordeleau joined up, and in the early '90s a brass section was grafted on. La Bottine Souriante became a big, exuberant band and a huge star, not only in folk circles but on the world music stage.

After 26 years as the frontman and lead singer, Lambert left La Bottine in 2002 to explore his own musical urges and ideas, keeping things in the family. He started La Pruche Libre, his own record label and artistic





La Bottine Souriante: Yves Lambert, far right

management company, with his wife, Françoise Boudrias, as manager and son Philippe Contré as secretary. The readjustment in his career took a little while to settle comfortably but within a couple of years Lambert formed Le Bébert Orchestra with Gauthier, Rondeau, mercurial fiddler Nicolas Pellerin, and bassist Simon Lepage. After the recession of 2008 hit, Lambert reduced the quintet to a more economical trio.

"In my last years with La Bottine, Olivier was my daughter's chum. He'd studied music at Concordia [University] and played electric guitar. He was living in the country, not seeing many people, and tripping out on Jimi Hendrix. He was the first musician that I wanted for my own band, and he's always been faithful to it through thick and thin. Tommy's my neighbour, and lives a five-minute drive away, and he was already a well-developed, smart musician when he joined up. On this last album, Tommy was responsible for all the recording, and acted as technician. He did a great job.

"We've all had our conflicts. A couple of years ago, at Folk Alliance

International in Kansas, Olivier told me he couldn't come on tour to England. Tommy had already said he, too, was unavailable. I became really angry and had to go and take a cold shower! Afterwards I came to realize that throughout my career I suffered from a lack of confidence because I was dependent on other musicians—and I healed myself from that sense of dependency. I realized I had good substitute players, and I let go. Olivier, Tommy, and I have a close mutual respect and understanding, so we can live happily together on tour. We have a ton of fun, and I feel that I've evolved."

There's a certain division of tasks within the trio. Lambert chooses the repertoire and provides the guiding spirit but while he contributes to the arrangements, the musical shaping and structuring is done by his two younger cohorts. Gauthier is the main contributor of original material, with three fine tunes on *Tentation*.

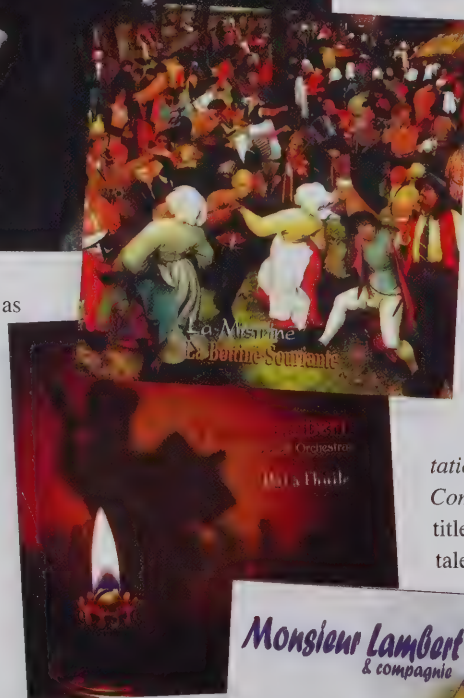
"Tommy can do things in two minutes that would take me a month. And he and Olivier are very up to date in terms of the prevailing tones and sonorities. We're just three musicians but we sound more like five. The arrangement of a tune like *Les Diables*, which I love in particular, is bold and progressive in feel. It's one of the songs I collected back in the '70s from an old singer, Conrad Laforte."

Lambert is continually striving for the right balance between the authenticity of tradition and the forces that reshape it. "The key is to not go against the nature of the music—which I feel was happening in my last years with

La Bottine. It can be subtle. Now I have a sufficient sense of integration of all the elements that I don't really have to think about it too much. I'm aware of the role I have to play in presenting things to an audience. At this point, I've got a lot of experience as an artist and I'm no longer tentative or nervous. I've made 20 albums, eight of them independently."

On *Tentation*, Lambert revisits three classic songs that he's recorded before in one form or another. *La Poule à Jean-Paul*, the opening track of *Tentation*, is on La Bottine's 1987 album *Tout Comme Au Jour De L'An* with the more usual title of *La Poule à Colin*—a magic-realism tale of everyday life in a Quebec village, with an errant chicken, an

angry farmer with a large fork, a brutal killing, a surrealistic feast, and a very dodgy priest. In the new title, the owner of the vagabond hen is 86-year-old farmer and traditional singer Jean-Paul Gui-



Monsieur Lambert & compagnie

récidive





Yves Lambert Trio: L to R – Tommy Gauthier, Yves Lambert, and Olivier Rondeau

mond, one of Lambert's enduring inspirations and sources of material. He provides an introduction, with accompanying clucks and squawks.

An earlier version of *V.I.P. pour l'enfer* was on La Bottine's *La Mistrine* (1994) and has the Devil doing the rounds of cheating tradesmen and rip-off merchants, denouncing them and bearing them down to hell. The trio has done a slimmer and tighter update, as well as adding a new verse, which has a certain prime minister being carried off as well, with a cannabis plant.

Les *Diabes* derives from an old custom of the Middle Ages that involved the clergy presenting brief scenes inside the cathedrals that featured tradesmen setting traps for the Devil, punishing and humiliating him as a way to encourage onlookers to resist his lures.

"Like the seller of songsheets who breaks the Devil's nose with his fiddle, or the baker who shovels him into the bread oven. The text I have is the result of lengthy ethnographic research—on the level of poetry, it's a comic masterpiece."

Cousinage, a *chanson à répondre*, is driven by foot percussion, with impeccable unison playing by Lambert and Gauthier, that the trio's chef d'orchestre Rondeau underpins with swing-jazz inflected guitar. The joyfully meandering narrative starts out with a bunch of lawyers from Paris, proceeds to yet another feast—a major theme of Québécois folk—with four bottles of champagne on each corner of the table, and winds up with sundry cousins sleeping off the effects with one another upstairs. No lack of temptations here. Lambert learned the song long ago from the late Ovilá Légaré.

The following track, *La Coquette à Poupa*, from another old-timer and fiddler, J.O. La Madeleine, opens with a bright Appalachian-style fiddle flourish that heralds Lambert on guimbarde (jaw harp) and Gauthier's droning fiddle, with Rondeau picking out the lively melody. It's Quebec good-time dance music in the grand style, played by one of the tightest trio's in music of any genre.

Carnal temptations are celebrated in another comic song, *L'Adultère*, learned from Jean-Paul Guimond. However, in the distinctly uncelebratory *L'Ignomie*, an anonymous piece that dates from the mid-19th century and the Temperance Movement, Lambert sings without irony of the travails and humiliation endured by the family of a drunkard. The text refers with contempt to a certain Lord Buvetier (Lord Barkeeper) who, according to Lambert, is Mr. Molson, of cheap-and-tasteless-beer infamy and a prime target for the devil in *V.I.P. pour l'enfer*.

Having tamed his own demons on the recording, Monsieur Lambert is currently at work planning how to stage the songs and tunes of *Tentation*.

"That's my priority—with a décor and other visual elements. A whole concept for a show." Meanwhile, he's just home from an eye-opening trip to Chile, where his son, Philippe, has been living for the past seven years and is establishing a touring circuit for artists.

"I just did a short series of shows in five venues south of Santiago, which were all very well technically equipped and staffed. It's really promising. There's something exciting happening down there, and I love it. I've never toured in that part of the world but there's a compatibility—especially if I adapt my method a bit to bring people in."

The South American jaunt chimes well with Lambert's present passion—learning the Tex-Mex accordion style of Flaco Jiménez. His artistic compass is definitely pointing south, and another recording and show is on the drawing board.

"I have a project with a U.S. producer, and I'm going into a studio down there in February or March to complete an album for a spectacle to be presented with the trio—maybe a quartet—in English to anglophone audiences. I've already got four pieces done. I can take time this winter to work on the rest of the material.

"The songs are from U.S. tradition. One, *Bummer Hotel*, was the favourite song of Joe Beef, a historic figure from Montreal from the 19th century. No anglophones know it, but it's great, and sounds a bit Cajun. We've also been working on a version of Doc Watson's *Little Sadie*—with a guimbarde in there it's really interesting." (Lambert sings the opening bar as mouth music.)

"I love American music. I was doing blues before I was doing Québécois trad, and I feel I'm completing a circle. Since the early '80s, I've been performing songs from Quebec for the American and Anglo-Canadians. But I'm tired of doing that—because they never understand the words!" says Lambert with a laugh.

"I want to present myself to them through their own music, with references to the great Québécois explorers like Joliette and people like Jack Kerouac in Maine. So many of the New England lumberjacks were from Quebec."

Next year, Monsieur Lambert and his trio's three-dimensional show *Tentation* looks set to lure devil-besotted francophones, while English speakers can expect to have the culottes magicked off them in their own language and with an outrageous French accent.



The Penguin Eggs Interview

Richard Thompson

He's a brilliant acoustic guitarist. He's an even better electric guitarist. He writes magnificent tunes and compelling lyrics. He's not a bad singer either...

Richard Thompson has done it all...and he's still doing it all. A bona fide folk-rock legend with a sharp wit, a ready turn-of-phrase, an interesting black beret thing forever on his head, a wonderful sense of humour and a very welcome amenable attitude to journalists. Musicians like Richard Thompson don't come around very often.

Anybody who saw Fairport Convention first setting out on their influential adventures in folk rock in the late '60s would be astonished that the tall, lean, curly haired lead guitarist cowering behind the others with his back to the audience a lot of time would subsequently emerge as one of the most consistent and enduring musical figures for the next 50 years.

Thompson was a key figure in the halcyon days of Fairport during their historic blend of folk and rock before striking out on his own as a songwriting of rare vision, character, and articulacy and forming a lovingly remembered duo with his then wife Linda Thompson.

They made six fondly remembered albums together, beginning with the classic *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight*, as Thompson's songwriting blossomed and deepened, his words finding a great foil in the emotional voice of Linda. And then it all went horribly wrong. With some of the tensions spilling out onstage, the marriage fell apart in some acrimony in the late '70s...at which point Richard unleashed a blistering solo career that has produced 18 or so highly regarded albums.

For most of that time he's lived on the West Coast of America, yet so much of his material still sounds quintessentially English. A roll call of his greatest songs is to reference many of the best songs of our generation—reflective narratives such as *Beeswing* and *Devonside*; songs of bitter fury such as *She Twists The Knife Again* and *I Misunderstood*; cinematic storyboards such as *1952 Vincent Black Lightning* and *From Galway To Graceland*; celebratory anthems such as *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight* and *Hokey Pokey*; and masterclasses in bleak melancholia such as *I'll Regret It All In The Morning* and his early, cheery look at death, *Meet On The Ledge*, a song that provided the most difficult gig of his life when he sang it at his mother's funeral.

After a glut of acoustic reworkings of some of his old recordings, he's back in blistering form on his emotional new album *13 Rivers*;

and sounding even more ferocious and explosive on tour with his loyal compadres Michael Jerome (drums), Taras Prodaniuk (bass), and Bobby Eichorn (guitar). He is also, of course, the head of something of a family dynasty—including his ex-wife Linda (with whom he's now on good terms), son Teddy, daughter Kamila (who sings with folk-rock band The Rails), and grandson Zak, a talented guitarist in his own right. A few years ago, Teddy Thompson curated a Thompson family band album involving them all in different combinations.

Colin Irwin caught up with Richard at the end of a triumphant U.K. tour.

Richard, how the devil are you?

"Well, I'm fine, actually."

Happy with the way the U.K. tour went?

"I thought we played well, and the response was amazing—people loved the band and loved the song choices.

Any particularly memorable moments, good or bad?

"My grandson, Zak Hobbs, got up at a couple of shows and played guitar. That kid is getting good! I might be opening for him next year."

Your playing seems to be getting more and more ferocious the older you get; how come?

"I so appreciate the opportunity to play electric. For economic reasons, I can't always carry a band, so when I do, I relish it."

A reaction to the acoustic classics albums? Were you dying to let rip again?

"I suppose so. It's not every year the band comes out."

Of course, now that you've achieved the grand old age of 65, you are a bona fide legend, but do you ever sit in wonder that audiences still flock to see you?

"I'm grateful they do. There have been good times and lean times, but it's been strong the last decade or so, and it's good to see the younger demographic in there."

Now, *13 Rivers*...phew! Some say your best of this century. What say you?

"You mean my other albums are shit? I think it's a strong collection of songs, and very

uptempo, which was not planned. The response has been excellent, which is the thing you never know—how a record will come across. People seem to emotionally get it, without understanding what it's talking about. What could be better than that?"

Proper old school, too. Analogue. Recorded in 10 days. Presumably that is deliberate—some sort of statement about modern musical styles and reliance on technology.

"I've done all records fairly fast, and all partly analogue. This is total analogue, up to the CD phase. We weren't in a hurry, we just didn't hit any snags. And the musicians are good enough to work at that speed."

The album is very dark, though, is it not?

"My normal seems to be other people's dark. When you grow up on murder ballads and mining disasters, it alters you a bit."

Presuming there are autobiographical elements in the material, it sounds as if you've had a bit of a rough time of it in the last year or so. Care to elaborate?

"I can't, really. Various family issues..."

Or are we trying to read too much into some of the harsher lyrics? Do you hate it when people try to analyze your lyrics and come to the wrong conclusion about what they mean?

"I don't always understand my own lyrics, and that's especially true of this bunch. I get the emotion, but sometimes the intention eludes me. I look at songs and ask myself why I go to these places. I like them a lot as songs, and in a couple of years I'll figure them out."

Perhaps you would like to throw some light on the inspiration for a couple of the tracks—*Bones Of Gilead*? *Do All These Tears Belong To You*? *The Dog In You*?

"*Bones Of Gilead*—I have no idea where this comes from. Scares me a bit, although it's a benign force that's galloping over the hill. *Do All These Tears*—this is about a friend who had a very tough upbringing, who somehow survived extraordinary abuse and displacement, but who came through it all and learned and grew every step of the way. *The Dog In You*—that's about someone I know who suffered at the hands of a sexual predator.



ible we had to be writing our own stuff, like King Crimson and Pink Floyd and everybody else was doing. So I was quite excited. My heroes were songwriters. I grew up with the songs of Robert Burns and stuff. My grandfather had a book of *Border Ballads* he gave me when I was quite young. And at a certain point in Fairport, I thought, 'this stuff is useful, I know it already'.

So traditional song was important?

"Yes. The anonymous songwriters of the tradition is the best place to learn, as far as I'm concerned. A good traditional song has everything. It's pared down to the bone with great images, it appeals to the senses, and it's all there bringing you into the story. And I love songwriters close to the tradition...Burns, Walter Scott, Yeats, Carolina Oliphant..."

But onstage, is it more fun belting it out with a band rather than playing a solo folkier show?

"Both approaches are great, and I'm so glad I can do both. They are very different experiences for me."

Do you get knackered after a blistering set, though?

"I get energized! For an hour or two, anyway. Then I'm knackered."

You still live in America but the story is you've recently swapped the West Coast for the East Coast? Why's that then?

"I want to be closer to the U.K., which I miss. It's a shorter hop."

I'm sure you have political opinions, but apart from the odd thing—like *Dad's Gonna Kill Me* (about the Iraq war)—you've never really tackled politics in music. Any reason for this?

"I do write political songs, but they are couched in allegory usually. You can write about a relationship between two people, and it's a metaphor for war. I wrote a song about Trump, back when he was just a businessman, and he was trying to con the locals in Scotland. When he became president, I tried writing new verses, but I found I couldn't keep up, there was some new horror every day."

Do you have a message for President Trump?

Oh, and *O Cinderella*...in which you talk about cupcakes?? Really? What's that all about?

"I was looking for something cheeky without being rude. Blancmange might have been too much. Toasted teacakes a bit too polite. It's a fine line..."

And while we're on it...*My Rock, My Rope*...which sounds meditative, spiritual, religious even? Any story behind it?

"I'm quite a spiritual person, and I frequently feel helpless against the forces loose in the universe, so I have to ask for help."

Do you plan the style of albums these days? Do you sit down and say, 'Right, I'm gonna write a rock'n'roll album now?' Or do you sit down, write the songs, and then decide how they will be arranged and performed?

"For this I was planning a band album. I collected songs, and then tried to see which of them belonged together, and more or less told the same story. The songs then tell you how they want to be played. Some songs can be done in all different ways."

Do you have a routine for songwriting?

"Yes and no. If I have a couple of weeks off I'll say this is writing time. Start early in the morning at 7, work 'til noon, and if it's not

happening I'll knock off and do something else. If I string that together over a few days, I'll get loads done. But there's other times when you're just throwing ideas around and taking notes. Trying to keep conscious all the time of writing. Listening to people talking on the bus. So if an idea is there you are ready to grab it."

Is it a painful process? How long does it take to write a song?

"You can write a good song in 10 minutes, certainly 20. But I might have a tune but can't get the words for it for years. So I hang on to the tune. I've got tunes like that and sets of lyrics I've never been able to set to music. Other songs I might have a verse and can't get another verse on. A song like *Never Again*, which I wrote in 1969. I added the first verse five years later. It took that long to get another verse. Sometime you write a tune and then you change your mind and change it. One song I wrote with Swarb (Dave Swarbrick), *Crazy Man Michael*, was originally to a different tune—*The Bonny House of Earlie*—which it probably fits better, but Swarb came up with this great tune."

What prompted you into songwriting in the first place?

"I tried to write songs from the age of 16, but I didn't really write anything properly until the first Fairport album. I said we couldn't be a covers band any more, if we wanted to be cred-



Richard, Linda, and Teddy Thompson

"It will end badly for you. You will be publicly humiliated on TV, forced to dance the Watusi naked, with your ass painted blue like a baboon."

You can tell us now...that song you did a few years ago, *Here Comes Geordie*...it WAS about Sting, wasn't it?

"It was about a pretentious, arrogant Tynesider, and there aren't many of those."

How do you feel about the *Still* album—and working with Jeff Tweedy—looking back?

"Jeff was a joy to work with, we had so much fun. He is very good at song structure and everyone's role in the creation of a track. I'm a big fan."

You usually get placed quite high in all those greatest guitarist of all time lists...who would you have at the top?

"Those lists often mash together genres—is Segovia better than Jeff Beck? All fairly futile and stupid. I hold innovation and originality very highly, probably above technique. For classical, Ida Presti. Jazz, Joe Pass. Country, Hank Garland. Rock, Hendrix, I suppose."

Do you ever get prone to nostalgia? You know, those dates wandering around the folk clubs with Linda...

"I loved those days! In reality they were

probably uncomfortable, and PAs didn't work or didn't exist, but at the time it was extraordinary, and I met the whole folk scene. Petrol was dirt cheap, you slept in the promoter's spare room—in comparative terms, we were well off! It was a huge learning experience."

How do you feel looking back on that Thompson Family album?

"I enjoyed it. It lacked a bit of cohesion, probably due to the fact that it was recorded thousands of miles apart. It was a very good idea, and I feel immensely proud to be part of such a musical family."

I guess it's stupid asking you what you consider your greatest achievements/best song/best album...

"I like the *Mock Tudor* album, and *Bright Lights*, and the new one...I can't do individual songs, it's different every day..."

Regrets? (But too few to mention?)

"Lack of focus in the '70s that led to slightly limp albums. Otherwise, learn and move on."

What song by another artist do you wish you'd written and why? Anyone you'd kill to work with?

"I work with the people I want to. I wish I'd written a song like [Bob Dylan's] *Tears Of Rage*."

Does it ever get too much? Do you ever wish you'd become a carpenter or something?

"Maybe a gardener—menial stuff, maybe at Kew."

Still playing cricket and coaching soccer? [He has a wonderful anecdote about coaching Arnie Schwarzenegger's son, Wolfie, in L.A., but to do it justice we'd have to fill the rest of the magazine with it.]

"I haven't coached soccer for a while. My last cricket innings was total crap—I had a hard time putting bat to ball. I almost retired there and then. I might give it one more crack."

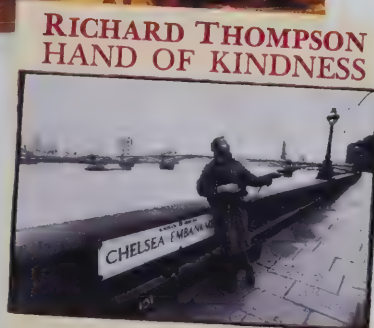
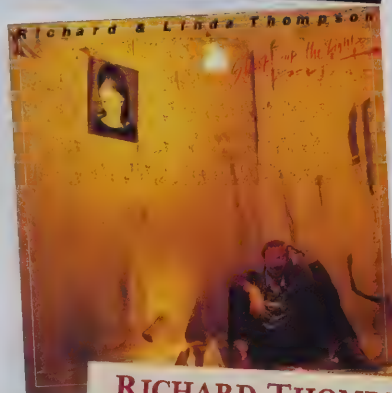
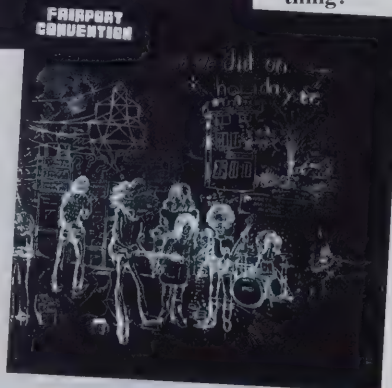
Do you keep track of all the young guns coming up? Anyone you've heard you particularly like?

"Wildwood Kin...Kitty McFarlane."

Any thoughts about Canadian festivals?

"I love the Canadian festivals—they are always well organized—in fact, a model of how to run a festival. The mosquitoes at Winnipeg are memorable, of course, the

size of hummingbirds. Trying to sing as they fly into your mouth is a challenge."



Reviews



64 Sekou Keita & Catrin Finch



66 Kitty Macfarlane



63 Stephen Fearing



59 Gwyneth Glyn



Kat Danser

Goin' Gone (Black Hen Music)



Armed with a deep, occasionally gruff yet earnest voice and a distinctive grasp of playing guitar, Kat Danser has released five authentic, blues-based albums of note, each one better than the last. *Goin' Gone* is the best of all and proof that Delta tributaries flow deep into south-eastern Saskatchewan. A tireless scholar (ethnomusicologist), she continues to finesse the music that inspires her, creating a singular form of blues that can truly be called her own.

Again, joining with talented string bender Steve Dawson, she teams with Jeremy Holmes (bass, mandolin), Gary Craig (drums, percussion), Matt Combs (fiddle, mandolin), and the stand-out sax and harmonica of Jim Hoke.

Her songwriting is another strength as the eight originals that drive this disc are as strong as her inventive covers of Fred McDowell and Sam McGee. With too many tracks to highlight, her own *Memphis, Tennessee* is an upbeat slidefest with a rollicking groove, featuring strong harp from Hoke and muscular guitar throughout.

Her take on McGee's *Chevrolet*

Car applies fiddle and a country backbeat to this love letter to a car. The stunningly beautiful *Kansas City Blues* shows her in perfect vocal control, adding the slow twist of Dawson's pedal steel against a backdrop of Spanish guitar. Trailblazing sounds are established with Mississippi John Hurt's *Train I Ride*, where Hoke's sax and Danser's rich slide reinvent the classic.

Danser's own *Light The Flame* adds sax and mandolin to lethal levels of slide for a tremendous takeaway while the gentle heart-break of *Time for Me To Go* closes the disc as she lets us down gently. A great release from a supreme talent overdue for a much wider audience.

— By Eric Thom

Robert Connely Farr & The Rebeltone Boys

Dirty South Blues (Independent)



At its highest levels, the blues has often become a caricature of its illustrious past as one of the foundational building blocks of popular music, more a mixture of suburban dad-rock and clean cut, easy-on-the-eyes, yet ultimately uninspired "phenoms", whose styles are often a retread

of the SRV-resurgent style of the mid-'80s.

The grit and darkness that entranced early adherents, and made it the dangerous "devil music" that scared the parents of rock'n'roll's first converts, was blanched and made entirely consumable for subsequent generations. Robert Connely Farr's *Dirty South Blues* makes an earnest attempt to get back to the style's roots, and succeeds with aplomb.

Farr's reedy timbre is tied tightly to the sound of the record, hanging on repeating, hypnotic riffs. The title cut is amped up mud, blood, and sweat, where Farr takes an unflinching look at the Mississippi of his youth with the line "*Take me back to the dirty old south, where the devil makes whiskey and the cross burn.*"

There's both history and mythology in that one statement, and Farr never shies away from the world he grew up in, or the street-level problems of his adopted hometown of Vancouver, revealing the inner conflict of the opiate-dependent on *Lady Heroin*, while revelling in the exultant juke joint boogie of *Just Jive*, with a feel and sound that captures what most can only imagine anymore: the forbidden excitement of sneaking up to some rural speakeasy, peering

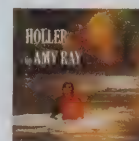
through the window, and knowing for certain that what you were seeing was exactly what you'd be cautioned against in church the next Sunday morning.

Farr and producer Leeroy Stagger have done an outstanding job of capturing the essence of the early blues, and Farr's lyrical sensibilities stick to the elemental. *Dirty South Blues* bleeds like the fingers of a farmhand, drenched in sweat and baked by the sun.

— By Michael Dunn

Amy Ray

Holler (Daemon Records/Compass Records)



Amy Ray's fifth studio record.

Holler, follows up on the singer/songwriter's shift to a

cleaner, more-classic, country-inspired sound that began on 2014's *Goodnight Tender*, a marked shift from the punk rock-inflected tones of her earlier work. What remains, though, is Ray's commitment to speaking hard truths through music, serving up the bitter pills that her country has been unwilling to swallow in recent years.

Ray leads *Holler* off with the highway-paced country rock of *Sure Feels Good Anyway*, an honest appraisal regarding her love for her home in the South, while remaining unflinching in her appraisal of the darker attitudes that still prevail in the region.

The back-porch vibe of *Oh City Man* demonstrates a rural exceptionalism, with Ray imploring city folk, preachers, and the rural folk





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alike to see through their valuation of money, and get back to the righteous travails of working the land, set to a tight, laid-back bluegrass arrangement.

Ray takes a breather from the heavy subject matter just in time with the rollicking shuffle of *Tonight I'm Paying The Rent*, a shaking two-step hinging on rock n' roll road stories, though she approaches the life of a musician with more of the euphoric excitement of the post-show glow than the weariness that often accompanies such material.

Amy Ray threw the kitchen sink into *Holler*, with huge arrangements featuring beautifully performed and recorded parts that fit each song impeccably, and with guest spots from a number of roots music's heaviest hitters, including Brandi Carlisle, Derek Trucks, and Vince Gill.

Holler is an expansive record, deep in thought on heavy subjects. There's the hipster listener's wish for Ray to approach this material with more of the rock'n'roll attitude of her earlier work, but perhaps the more traditional production could pull the people who need to hear Amy Ray's words a little closer.

— By Michael Dunn

Emilyn Stam & Filippo Gambetta

Shorelines (Borealis Records)



There's a Vancouver connection to this duo's partnership—they met in 2003 through a mutual friend, the much-missed Oliver Schroer, at the city's Folk

Music Festival.

Emilyn's is a B.C. native and in 2016 she visited Filippo's hometown, Genova, Italy, to get started on this fine duo project.

This debut album weaves together her piano and five-string fiddle with his diatonic accordion to create original and beguiling melodies from a host of sources and inspirations. You can find mazurkas, polkas, bourrées, gavottes, and waltzes along with tunes that defy categorization, due to their unusual rhythms and time signatures and their melodic leaps and bounds.

The tunes are mostly originals by the duo including some collaborations, and a couple of traditional Italian pieces, as well as Oliver Schroer's composition, which provides the title track. This is a collection with strong and original roots and real depth that stands up to repeated listening.

— By Tim Readman

Joe Nolan

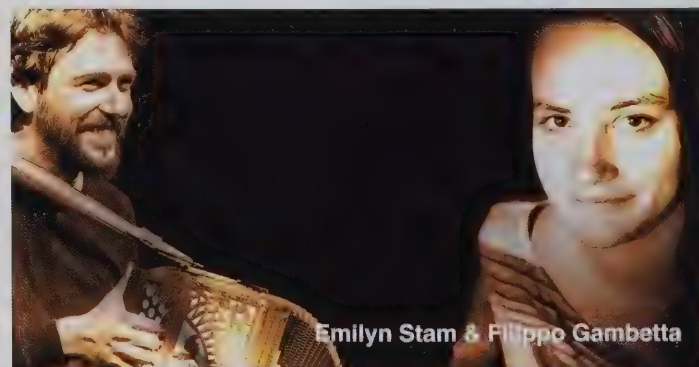
Cry Baby (Independent)



I used to see Joe Nolan around Edmonton more than a decade ago, a talented teenager

singing his sweet folk songs filled with idealism. Joe is an adult now and his voice, sound, and lyrics have all become a lot more gritty.

These days, Nolan sings of being blackout drunk, dead ends, broken hearts, Pall Malls and PBRs. He also sings so eloquently about being so tempted by the beautiful siren of the music business and being so tired of "the poets falling to their knees for the captains of



Emilyn Stam & Filippo Gambetta



"Suzie Vinnick is a unique talent; a triple threat singer/songwriter/guitarist. She is emotive, joyous and funky all in the same song. Shake the Love Around is a great evolutionary step for this thoughtful and engaging artist."

— Blues Blast Magazine

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the industry” and being asked “what are you doing with your whole life?” Yet there seems to be light at the end of the tunnel, that despite the dice always being loaded, you’ve got to “stand up for your love.”

Nolan, who virtually grew up in the music business, takes us through the peaks and troughs of that life or, really, of anybody’s life. Infused with darkness, light, hope, and dread, he really has come of age as a songwriter.

The production and musicianship on this disc are definitely equal to the task of bringing out the best in Nolan’s tunes. Lots of jangly electric guitars, the occasional wash of organ, and female backup singers inject a ton of soul into the mix. Some of Alberta’s best have been recruited here, including bassist Mike Lent, guitarists Grant Siemens and Russell Broom, and drummer Lyle Molzan. The final track, the Springsteen-esque *Ode to Sturgeon County*, features a string section arranged by the dearly departed Tommy Banks.

— By Mike Sadava

Joe Louis Walker Bruce Katz Giles Robson

Journeys to the Heart of the Blues (Alligator)



Sometimes these collaborations are contractual con-

descriptions thought up by the wrong people. On occasion, they can be celebrations of pure fun and real music between like-minded players. This is one of those and, while Walker may be the most recognizable of the three, it’s the keyboard wizardry of Katz and the harp work of relative newcomer Robson that seal the deal.

Never known for the quality of his vocals over his lionhearted guitar performances, Walker helms the microphone and, although it seems to take him some time to match the groove, his loose approach to the material proves highly complementary to these relatively obscure blues covers.

Katz, and his keyboards drive



the majority of these tunes—if not the other players—providing a schooled contrast to Walker’s rough touch. An entirely acoustic setting, Robson’s impressive performance glues it all together.

From Blind Willie McTell’s *Murderer’s Home* to the outrageous cover of Big Maceo’s *Poor Kelly Blues*, less appears to be more as the lack of drums and bass is not a limiting factor to the overall quality of these performances. In fact, a quick run-through of Sonny Boy Williamson’s *I’m A Lonely Man* bears testament to the blues power of this trio. It’s also Walker’s most comfortable vocal.

Likewise, Roosevelt Sykes’s *Feel Like Blowin’ My Horn* presents three simpatico artists with a firm grasp on the material. From Katz’s dazzling piano on *Hell Ain’t But A Mile and a Quarter* to Robson’s ownership of the lone non-cover, *G&J Boogie*, it’s Walker’s deeply soulful vocal on *Poor Kelly Blues* that steals the show.

The instrumental *Chicago Breakdown* may tease the extreme skills of Katz’s keyboard prowess but it’s Son Bonds’s *Hard Pill To Swallow* and the N’awlins-soaked *Real Gone Lover* that entirely deliver on the unexpected promise of three blues savants, playing as one.

— By Eric Thom

Gwyneth Glyn

Tro (Bendigedig)



Gwyneth Glyn is a poet, playwright, singer, and musician from north Wales. Following her 2016 success with *Ghazalaw*, a collaboration with the Indian ghazal singer Tauseef Akhtar, which received a BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards nomination for Best Traditional Track for the song *Moliannwn/Ishq karo*, has released her fourth album, *Tro* (Welsh for turn).

A beautiful, 13-track audio passport, rich with global inspirations, delicately woven in Welsh with lush instrumentation and musical imagery.

Quite simply, *Tro* is an exquisite aural experience! Gwyneth is more than just a resident of Wales, she’s a resident of the world. Although 10 of the 13 tracks are in Welsh, her global influences are elegantly felt throughout the layers of this album.

Trafaeliais/Kidé-magni, originally written by Seckou, is overlaid with *Trafaeliais y Byd*, a Welsh folk song. Gwyneth also blends the traditional with the new, as in the gorgeous rendition of the traditional American/Scottish folk song *Katie Cruel* with *Y Gnawas* (The Bitch) or with *Ffair*, a superb

translation of the Irish folk song *She Moved Through the Fair*.

It is said that good music transcends language and with *Tro* one does not need to be Welsh to appreciate its loveliness. *Tro* is emotional! It’s captivating! The instrumentation is beautifully light, with rich, subtle textures of the kora, lap steel, banjo, crwth, and bansitar.

Tro is a delightful turn that must be taken (Mae *Tro* yn dro hyfryd y mae’n rhaid ei gymryd).

— By Phil Harries

David Olney

This Side Or The Other (Black Hen Music)



In some of the most troubling times of the past century, folk music often acted

as a conduit to our morality. The musical lines eventually blurred between the statements of Guthrie, Dylan, Mitchell, Cooke, or Gaye, but the common thread was that artists often had something important to say, and the platform from which to say it.

David Olney’s latest, *This Side Or The Other*, is an honest attempt to give folk music its collective voice back on matters that affect us all.

Sparsely and evocatively packaged in black and white, the record cuts to the quick, with the two-step of *Always The Stranger*, a cut highlighting the distance and alienation people feel from one another all too often.

The Wall benefits from some



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cool production ideas, with bell-like keyboard notes ringing throughout over tremolo Telecaster. The title cut stands out with the most mobile chorus melody, while *Death Will Not Divide Us* has an infectious bounce in its Texas roadhouse feel.

The second half of the record finds Olney ruminating mostly on love and loss, and it's here that listeners will catch some of the meaningful emotion in his naturally subtle vocal.

While its admirable that Olney went out of his way to make a record with a message, that message is ultimately overshadowed by clunky lyrics delivered without any of the anger that the subject matter deserves. In the darkness of these times, songs with a message of protest must be accompanied by a voice that seethes, a truth that's as uncomfortable to speak as it is to feel in the first place.

— By Michael Dunn

Tri-Continental

Dust Dance (Independent)



The latest Tri-Continental CD (they've had at least four previous: *Live*, *Drifting*, *Tri-Continental*, and *Let's Play*) focuses on what these three guitar players/singer/songwriters do best: fluid, fairly heavy electrified blues augmented by acoustic playing here and there.

The three players are all professional solo artists in their own

right: Bill Bourne, Lester Quitzau, and Randriamananjara Radofa Besata (a.k.a. Madagascar Slim). On this disc, recorded at Edmonton's The Audio Department, they're backed up by producer/engineer/mixer Harry Gregg (Kimberley MacGregor Band, Moshin Zaman, Cadence, and Nathan, etc.) on bass and Michael Treadway on drums, percussion and backing vocals.

The group really covers a wide range of sounds and influences—blues, western, and world music—and has a knack for expanding and broadening one another's sounds. Guitar aficionados will appreciate this disc particularly.

The snaking African guitar lines of Madagascar Slim's *Lakalaka* or *Tonokira* are particularly appealing to this critic but Lester Quitzau gets some tasty more-romantic licks in, too. Bill Bourne does a rocking arrangement of *Stackerlee*, the traditional murder ballad about a fight over a Stetson hat, and Bourne's *Dancing In Old Crow* is quite catchy and could become a popular number. All in all, a solid disc from the trio.

— By Barry Hammond

Orit Shimoni


Lost and Found on the Road to Nowhere



(Independent)

This tireless troubadour has been hard at it since '95. By tireless, she's logged more miles than Jimmie Rodgers dreamt possible, constantly playing the

Many thanks to everyone who hosted me and helped to make this such a great year.



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world's stages and countless house concerts, making myriad friends while earning a global fanbase along the way.

When she first left home at age 17, her desires weren't entirely matched by her musical talents. Yet practice makes perfect and, once she'd stockpiled the confidence required, the rest fell nicely into place. Over the past decade, she'd mastered the art of travelling, fueling her muse while becoming a master storyteller.

Eight albums later, she's issued this—her best album yet. Cover your eyes as her talents are shining very brightly. Even more surprising is that the entire project, recorded in Holland, is the sole work of Shimoni and friend, producer, musician Martin van de Vrugt—accompanying themselves on guitar, banjo, harp, accordion, pedal steel, and complementary effects.

Where Shimoni can lean heavily towards the dark, moody side of life, *Lost* is surprisingly upbeat, if not thoroughly uplifting. Songs such as the brilliant *Peace of Mind* and *It Took A Long Time* are superlative compositions demonstrating all of her abilities at once.

Her lush vocals are rich with emotion while her stripped-down choice of instrumentation seems to add lustre to her voice.

Cue *Smarter Than Me* and discover a lyricist at the top of her game, painting a near-perfect character study set to a gracefully swaying, Parisienne-flavoured waltz of a song.

Her *Song for Townes* is absolutely haunting, embellished with banjo, acoustic guitar, accordion, pedal steel, and delicate, ethereal chorus. The delicately positioned *Where To Begin* seems autobiographical and may reveal this wanderer's *modus operandi*, while the closing *Truth Is a Hard Line*, with its crying pedal steel, gives way to a glorious chorus of voices that underline its clever lyric, lifting it skyward. Highly recommended (live and on record).

— By Eric Thom



Breabach

Frenzy of the Meeting (Breabach Records)



Overseen by Eamon Doorley of Danú and the Julie Fowlis Band, his fruitful production rekindles a restorative, gratifying, warmth on *Frenzy of the Meeting* not heard aboard a Scottish Band's *Anthem For The Common Man* or Capercaillie's *Sidewalk*. Similar elements on this new Breabach disc include the emotive songwriting of Ewan Robertson (*Birds of Passage*) and Calum MacCrimmon (*Winter Winds*), and the glorious Gaelic singing of Megan Henderson—her voice surely the equal of a young Karen Matheson's—casts numerous spells on this recording.

At the heart of this quintet, though, beats the powerful, consummate twin piping of James Duncan Mackenzie and the Edmonton-raised MacCrimmon. Particularly imposing is their cover of the celebrated John D. Burgess's *Invergordon's Welcome*, which segues brilliantly into Henderson's peurt a buel singing on *An E Mo Chur Fodhad? Knees Up*, on the other hand, builds from

James Lindsey's tasty bass lines and Ewan Robertson's instinctive acoustic guitar rhythms, draws in the pipes, until Henderson wraps that glorious voice around *Dòchas Glan Na Fàire*. Google This follows a similar thread but propelled by bass, wooden flute, and Henderson's sublime fiddling before she settles into the waulking song *Mo Nighean Donn Hò Gà*.

Balanced. Seamless. Brilliant. *Frenzy of the Meeting* boxes all the ticks.

— By Roddy Campbell

Hamish Napier

The Railway (Strathspey Records)



This is the followup to this keyboard/whistle man's 2016 debut, *The River*. He's been keeping plenty busy meanwhile, playing on a host of other releases from the likes of Nae Plans and Duncan Chisholm.

The Railway was commissioned by the Highland Heritage and Cultural Centre in his native Speyside to celebrate the old railway that ran along The Speyside Way, a fragment of which happily is still with us, albeit as a volunteer-run 10-mile preserved line.

The gorgeous countryside, the characters, engines, and romance of the line and its times are all heartily celebrated in this inspired suite of music. Hamish's brother, Findlay, weighs in with two fine songs—*Jocky the Mole* (about a speed demon on the railway) and the lilting *The World Came In By Rail*.

The musical portrayal of journeying on this scenic riverside route is perfectly captured in tunes such as *Up The Hill*, with The *Balmenach Hornpipe* taking us upwards on a slow climb and O'er Drumochter sending us hurtling down the incline on the other side.

Elsewhere *Double Header* praises two engines, The Hiker and The Sojer, while the rhythm of steam



is powerfully evoked on *The Firebox*, and the advent of the mighty diesel locomotive is celebrated in *Diesel*—all of which have Ross Ainslie's mercurial bagpipes to the forefront.

The album ends with a trilogy of tunes—*The Railwayman* starting with the gentle *The Railwayman Air* and progressing through the stirring *March of the Bairns* and culminating in three ceilidh melodies, *The Fireman/The Driver/The Railwayman March*, featuring exciting fiddling from Patsy Reid.

The other musicians include Ewan Robertson on guitar and James Lindsay and Fraser Stone on bass and drums, respectively.

The Railway is beautifully packaged and illustrated and includes a wonderful wee booklet giving background to the pieces. Highly recommended—so climb aboard for a ride you won't forget!

— By Tim Readman

Ray Bonneville

At King Electric (Stoney Records)



I haven't heard music this good since J.J. Cale was in his prime. Not that their styles are even similar but they do share the distinctive sound of a growling vocal and a deceptively simple groove that always runs deep. Subtle, like a collision with a Mack truck.

Quite possibly his strongest release, it's also a study in minimalism. Eleven sturdy, laid-back originals that mine a solid beat with little more than the occasional embellishment of accordion, piano, harp, or B3. Bonneville paints his dark portraits in the time-honoured tradition of focusing on his acoustic, fingerstyle guitar playing and his well-smoked vocals, delivered at a carefully measured shuffle. The gentle, loping Bonneville groove is unmistakably his. There's clearly a lot of New Orleans seeping into his country blues.

From the uptempo pace of the slightly ominous *Waiting On The Night* to the lazy gait of the infec-



tious *Tender Heart*, Bonneville's a poet with a thoroughly seductive approach to conjuring the right atmosphere for each and every narrative.

The more complex *South of the Blues* may approximate a bigger band sound with its electric piano, electric guitar solo, and fat percussion yet it's the quiet magic he works on the simple, sultry *Codeine* that remains his stock and trade.

Songs such as *Until Such A Day* may boast the bigger hook but it's Bonneville's ability to jazz up a

New Orleans-style shuffle like he does on *Papchulalay* that proves most endearing. The slightly sinister *The Day They Let Me Out* is as unsettling as a dark back alley, complete with sparse accompaniment and a snake-like lead guitar. Yet he can turn on a dime, adding significant intensity to the mood as he does on the percussion-rich *Riverside Drive*. His ninth release, there's clearly little Bonneville can do to do it better than he already does on these 11 tracks. Simply perfect.

— By Eric Thom



John Tams

An Introduction to John Tams (Topic Records)



So this record is exactly what it is supposed to be—it's an introduction to John Tams.

Although to some people, John Tams needs no introduction.

Like people who watched the British ITV series of films entitled *Sharpe*, where he was Rifleman Daniel Hagman (1993–1997). And if you read farther in the credits, he composed the music for each of the 18 films.

Or people who enjoyed the music in the production of *Warhorse* at the National Theatre.

Or people who remember Muckram Wakes, his first band.

Or fans of the Albion Band, with whom he played with from the '70s to the '90s.

Or fans of Home Service (1984–2011).

Or fans of his three solo albums in the early 2000s.

This collection features songs all written by Tams and sung by Tams in his liltily powerful voice. The first two from his time in the band Home Service, the rest from various stages and productions he was involved with.

The songs are strong, the arrangements wonderful, and if you've not encountered his work before it is a great introduction to Jon Tams. There's reason he has been around for six decades. Check it out.

— By les siemieniuk

Darol Anger & Emy Phelps

Music of Our People (Independent)



Great songs may get old but they never die. Arguably, the '60s was one of those

eras that spawned many memorable tunes, and Darol Anger and his musical/life partner Emy Phelps have injected new life into 11 well-curated songs.

Anger is best known as the original violinist with the David Grisman Quintet, as well as Montreux,

the duet with Mike Marshall, and the Republic of Strings. Phelps has long been a mainstay on the Oregon music scene, fronting her own band. They have recruited a big musical crew, including Lake Street Dive bassist Bridget Kearney, Celtic harpist Maeve Gilchrist, and steel guitarist Charlie Rose, to name a few. Most of them, with the exception of Tony Trishka (b.1940), were born decades after the “Roaring Sixties.”

They have definitely made the songs their own with arrangements that can extend a three-minute pop song into a long musical exploration. From Carol King to the Grateful Dead to Jimmy Webb’s masterpiece *Wichita Lineman* to *These Boots are Made for Walkin’*, which has new life thanks to the Me Too movement, this disc will take you back and move you forward at the same time.

They have also done something I’ve never heard before—done justice to a couple of Laura Nyro songs. I never liked any of those radio versions by pop bands such as the Fifth Dimension, but Nyro, Phelps and Co. have created gems with their takes, especially on *Stone Soul Picnic*, with Celtic harp and pedal steel guitar.

— By Mike Sadava

The Tannahill Weavers

Orach (Compass Records)



Fifty years! How many bands can boast they’ve been going that long?

Well, these purvey-

ors of songs and tunes steeped in the Scots tradition certainly can.

Joining current members Roy Gullane, Phil Smillie, John Martin, and Lorne MacDougall for this special release are heavyweights such as Dougie MacLean, Aaron Jones, Innes White, and Davie Hunter.

While much of the playing is evocative of ‘60s-style Scottish trad, this is clearly done on purpose to distinguish this venerable bunch from the host of more recent young pretenders.

Original singer John Cassidy is



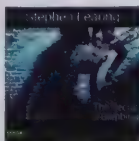
invited back for a touching reading of the oil-rig ballad *Jenny A’ Things*. Other standout songs are *Jessie The Floo’er O’ Dunblane*, with Ross Kennedy singing, and *The Battle Of Sheriffmuir*, recorded in White Rock, BC, and featuring ‘70s Weaver Al MacLeod, of Bourne and MacLeod fame. The record closes with *Gordon Duncan Set* commemorating the late former member, bagpiper, whistle player, and composer.

There are so many stories in this collection it is best to sit down with booklet in hand and read along as the music plays. It’s golden!

— By Tim Readman

Stephen Fearing

The Secret of Climbing (Rega Records)



Take one Stephen Fearing, two mics (one vocal, one guitar), a vintage Studer eight-channel tape recorder, then cut directly to vinyl with no overdubs, processing, or studio gadgetry in between.

What do you get? *The Secret of Climbing*, and as the press release emphasizes, “a limited edition, vinyl-only release that captures the subtle emotions of his mesmerizing voice and masterful guitar work in their purest form, unob-

scured by computers or studio wizardry.”

That’s for those who have the turntable, old or new, to play it and the ears to appreciate the effort taken by craftsmen.

This project comes out in a time when most people listen on earbuds to MP3 coded productions. I gave up my turntable a long time ago and never made the switch back, mostly because of convenience.

I appreciate the effort and commitment and intent by Stephen and his cohort, Roy Gandy. But I got the reviewing assignment because Roddy, our esteemed editor, couldn’t find an audiophile in his stable of writers who also had a turntable.

So I’m here to say that besides the intended audio event, *The Secret of Climbing* also works just as a new collection of great songs from Mr. Fearing.

Red Lights in the Rain is a stunning song beautifully played, sung, and written: “*Seems my whole life has been in motion / I learned to pack a suitcase as a child.*”

The Secret of Climbing features seven new songs, including the title track based on the works of Nelson Mandela, and a lovely, stripped-down version of last year’s *Every Soul’s a Sailor*.

The Secret of Climbing is a wonderful expression of the art Stephen Fearing brings to the craft of songwriting. A true artist. He just gets better with each outing.

— By les siemieniuk

Grace Petrie

Queer As Folk (Independent)



Leicester-based folksinger Grace Petrie is as culturally relevant and utterly compelling

as anyone else telling folk music stories today—especially in such a tumultuous and divided political and social landscape.

Queer As Folk, Petrie’s newest studio album, serves as a powerful protest against the disenfranchisement of the poor, neglected, and marginalized while affirming and championing her stance on LGBTQ+ issues such as gender conformity and societal expectations.

Petrie’s love of folk music is as inherently evident in her life as is her fiercely passionate involvement with social and cultural issues.

Throughout *Queer As Folk*, songs such as *A Young Woman’s Tale* pay direct homage to Ian Campbell. While Campbell’s *An Old Man’s Tale* helped define a generation of folk sensibility,

Petrie's lyrical reimagining deals with her nation's current political strife and the negative effects of Tory austerity.

Queer As Folk showcases her political prowess and sharp wit, with fantastic instrumentation featuring fiddle, guitar, and a full band's swing to keep her listener in groove.

Petrie shines in these faster numbers such as *Black Tie*, a powerfully affirming message to young LGBTQ+ women where she rallies against how "the images that fucked you we're a patriarchal structure".

Queer As Folk is as much an anthem of protest as it is of love and understanding for queer culture and identity.

— Levi Gogerla

Sekou Keita & Catrin Finch

SOAR (Bendigedig)



Welsh harpist Catrin Finch and Senegalese kora player Sekou Keita blend two distinct

musical cultures together in their second and highly anticipated release, *SOAR*.

The spacious and radiant choruses that Finch's harp produce float softly above the low, sombre sound of Keita's kora strings and deep evocative voice.

The intricate musical interplay between these two prodigious musicians of evidently different upbringing and cultures are as distinct as they are synergetic, as their ethereal melodies cascade together like an osprey in flight.

SOAR boasts rapturously elegant harp prowess with each musician seamlessly working in tandem as their melodies and key changes are executed in driving unison.

Tracks such as *Bach to Baisso* blend beautifully their two unique harp styles, borrowing the famous harp aria (Bach's *Goldberg Variations*) with traditional Mandingue music of *Baisso*, an ancient and steadfast tune in the Senegalese kora tradition.

Catrin Finch and Sekou Keita



draw heavily on the diverse traditions of classical, roots, and shared world music, epitomizing the elaborate and varied musical expressions of two distinct and entrancing musical cultures.

The shape and scope of *SOAR* is a profound meditation of shared interpersonal similarity, while revealing the importance and beauty of cross-cultural collaboration.

— By Levi Gogerla

Dave McEathron

Abandoned Companions & The Abandoned Companions Companion Piece (Watson Entertainment)



The first thing you'll notice when you see this CD is the unique, hand-

tooled leather packaging. This and the bound liner notes within are hints at the dedication to craft that is seen not only in the unusual package but also heard in the songs themselves.

Dave McEathron shows the roots-rock chops he earned as part of the Warped 45s but has really come home in this stripped down, folkier sound. The included four-song EP adds a little edge to several of the songs and also includes a couple more that hearken back to his early days.

Extremely skilled with a turn of phrase, McEathron's talent for storytelling takes you into worlds of hard luck, broken hearts, and simply figuring out which way

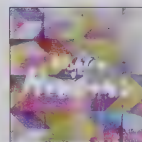
the winds of change will blow you. There is something wellworn about these songs, a comfortable feeling of homecoming. The more you listen, the more you hear—with little details in lyrics and lovely acoustic instrumentation taking you deeper into each song.

Stand-out tracks are the David Francey co-write *Luck* and *His Mother Named Him Angel*, the story of a blue-collar worker who changes his name because, "Who could ever be that good?" Authenticity is a word that gets tossed around a lot these days but everything about this project is authentic, relatable, and real.

— By Tanya Corbin

Vishtën

Horizons (Independent)



The traditional Acadian music and culture of Eastern Canada has been a tour de force

and longstanding staple in roots music's enduring legacy. Vishtën, a French-Acadian trio, epitomize francophone culture, blending neo-traditional folk storytelling and virtuosic traditional instrumentation that's both progressive in atmosphere and intelligent in composition.

Horizons, Vishtën's sixth studio album, is firmly rooted in Canada's Maritime provinces' francophone sound and culture. Instrumental tracks such as *Les clefs de la prison* showcase the unity and compositional strengths of both sisters Emmanuelle and Pastelle Leblanc and multi-instrumentalist Pascal Miousse, with rich and layered fiddle work set against a gorgeous whistling backdrop.

With a mix of modern traditional folk pieces and technical original compositions, *Horizons* explores both the multicultural Eastern Canadian folk foundations while showcasing musicianship and fiddle work leagues ahead of other contemporary roots musicians.

The lyrics are sung in French but with Emmanuelle and Pastelle's voices harmonizing so celestially one needs not speak the language to enjoy the layered sonic landscapes and gorgeous melodies throughout the album's 11 tracks.

Horizons is an ethereal and profound homage to Acadian, Celtic, and Canadian roots storytelling. It combines strong traditional folk musicianship and a unique cultural lens that helps listeners explore Canada's rich musical history, the contemporary, and the possible horizons that might lay beyond.

— By Levi Gogerla



Matt Mays

Twice Upon a Hell of a Time (Sonic Records)



Hamilton-born singer/songwriter Matt Mays doesn't just strip down his 2017 release *Once*

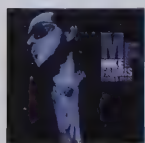
Upon a Hell of a Time with his latest offering, he also re-imagines these songs in ways you wouldn't think of, especially if you've grown used to the barnstorming rock'n'roll of the original.

Those expecting a simple, unplugged set of acoustic versions will be surprised at the arrangements May drapes over his tunes; like *Ola Volo*, which swaps out electric guitars for pedal steel, ukuleles, and hand claps, or the more muted, vocal-heavy take on *NYC Girls*, which in its original incarnation was something of a hit on Canadian radio stations last winter. Special guests such as Anthony Carone of The Arkells (on *NYC Girls* and *Perfectly Wasted*) add some nice touches but in the end it's Mays who does most of the heavy musical lifting, suggesting unexplored nuances and spaces in songs that you thought you knew. As with Martyn Joseph, who did much the same thing with 2015/2016's *Sanctuary and Sanctuary Acoustic*, Mays is simply showing how elastic his music can be, and on *Twice* he does an excellent job at that.

— By Tom Murray

Mike Farris

Silver and Stone (Compass Records)



Are you in a bad mood? *Silver and Stone* is the cure. If you're not smiling as the sax solo on the opening track, *Tennessee Girl*, kicks in, you have a heart of stone.

Mike Farris's rockin', rootsy rhythm and blues recording is a collection of covers and originals and, frankly, it's hard to tell which are which. They range from blues rockers to heart-breaking soul stirrers.

And, of course, there's that voice. Oh my, Mike's voice. Pick your adjective—powerful, soulful,



soring, crisp, and clear. Farris easily keeps company with legendary soul singer such as Curtis Mayfield and Sam Cooke. Farris ends the record with a Cooke cover, *I'll Come Running Back To You*.

Silver and Stone refers to a ring Farris gave his wife, who stood with him through his addiction and recovery, and there are certainly some love letters here. For example, the Al Green-influenced *Movin' Me*, with a blistering wah-wah-soaked guitar solo courtesy of blues rock guitar show off Joe Bonamassa. Farris won a Grammy for Best Roots Gospel Album a few years ago, and while this is more secular fare, there are backing vocals suitable for Sunday at church plus plenty of organ swells, but mostly of the B3 variety.

— By Eric Rosenbaum

Eric Lindell

Revolution In Your Heart (Alligator Records)



Eric Lindell's music is injected with lots of life. While his guitar tone has hues of blues, his energetic vocals and aggressive pace easily push him closer to the category of blue-eyed soul.

Like Delbert McClinton, Lindell's vocals are stage-front and the music is more groove-oriented than tuneful. Hooks are present but they're more singer driven than band propelled. This may

be because, here, Lindell is the band—playing all instruments save drums (Willie McMains) with a guest piano shot with Kevin McKendree (*Millie Kay*).

As a result, the usual chemistry that pushes those who play together is replaced by a confident front man with 11 strong originals and one co-write (Seth Walker). Per usual, McMains's drumming more than delivers on that essential element of N'awlins strut that Lindell fans expect. Lindell's own background vocals add much dimension to the body of his pleading voice.

Many songs stand out in this upbeat collection but no less than *Heavy Heart* delivers on lofty expectations on all levels, from his matter-of-fact lyrics and soulful delivery to its second line

percussion.

Likewise, *How Could This Be?* cruises along on the strengths of Lindell's Albert King-schooled guitar lines and his strongly self-backed vocal. *Big Horse* cranks up the funk element, compete with effective use of wah-wah guitar and its killer chorus. The delightful *Pat West* is a heartfelt story/song in tribute to a dear friend, striking a chord with anyone who's ever lost someone important—hardly blues, but blues-inducing.

The drum-driven *Kelly Ridge* taps into a similar sentiment of days gone by while the equally lively *Appaloosa* adds an element of country guitar to his sound. Speaking of country, *Millie Kay* jumps out as guest pianist Kevin McKendree adds an entirely different sense of dimension to the composition, Lindell's country-sounding guitar making the perfect marriage.

The fact that, no matter which direction Lindell tips towards, everything is wrapped with an element of that distinctive Crescent City funk, which adds a powerful signature to everything he does.

— By Eric Thom

Braden Gates

Pictures of Us (Borealis Records)



This richly produced release is the fourth by native Edmontonian Gates. Yet it's such a varied and refreshing



set of songs it's a wonder he's not already better known. Branded a folk artist, the musical backdrop to many of these dozen originals is surprisingly polished, opening the door to a singer/songwriter with places to go.

It surely doesn't hurt that his fingerstyle guitar playing is spell-binding while his emotive voice—an earthy rasp recalling equal parts Steve Forbert to Loudon Wainwright, among others—wins you over quickly.

Guests include Jaron-Freeman-Fox (viola), Emmet Michael (harmony vocal), and Daniel Gervais adds fiddle when Gates isn't adding it himself, his 'second' instrument. A cast of inviting characters grace each story and each song reads like a book.

If you go directly to the title track, featuring Gates's guitar and Elliot Thomas's banjo, its comfortable pace reveals the hint of Wainwright's poetic sense of observational wit together with Forbert's throaty laugh.

Influences aside, Gates's exceptional lyrics seem autobiographical and purposely localized. Take *Best Of Me* and/or the Dylanesque *Blue Sky With A Chance Of Rain*—all blazing harp from Dan Shinnon and rapid-fire delivery of his lyric.

Casting Fly takes to the country through Gates's fiddle and loping gait in a tale where happy memories intersect with sadness and loss. *Mama, I've Tried* might recall Murray McLachlan with its heavy serving of harp (plus some great B3) yet Gates's own acoustic

guitar skills and inherent sense of charm is immediately apparent across each and every song.

The upbeat message driving *Still It Shines* may contrast heavily with the much darker *Happy Little Town*, yet it's his seasoned musical skills, his standout songwriting, and his overall charisma which quickly establish the arrival of a significant talent.

— By Eric Thom

Rodney Crowell

Christmas Everywhere (New West Records)



As you might expect, Rodney Crowell hasn't done the traditional Christmas record, where the artist takes their favourite Christmas carols and perhaps puts their own individual spin or a new arrangement on the traditional.

Instead, he takes the subject of Christmas and digs deep into it, examining it under the razor of his songwriter's sensibility, trying to wring some sense or real emotion out of it, frequently finding the cynical, offbeat, or darker aspects of it but also some real emotion underneath the glitz.

All the songs on this disc are originals, covering the holiday in all its moods, from too cheerful voices of *Christmas Lament* (*We'll See You In The Mall*) to the swinging guitar of *Christmas Everywhere* (where Lera Lynn gets a heartfelt vocal in on the slightly offbeat subject of John Lennon's death) to the more spoken-word

lament of *Christmas In Vidor* to the bluesy *When The Fat Guy Tries The Chimney On For Size*, the rocking *Very Merry Christmas*, the caroly *Come Christmas*, the wrenching ballad *Merry Christmas From An Empty Bed* (featuring another passionate guest vocal by Brennon Leigh), or the sad song *Christmas In New York*.

At least three of the tracks (*Christmas Makes Me Sad*, *Christmas For The Blues*, and *Come Christmas*) have the potential and staying power to become standards but all are at least worth several listens to get at their depths. It might not be the most upbeat of Christmas discs but you can't doubt its sincerity and honesty.

— By Barry Hammond

Kitty Macfarlane

Namer of Clouds (Navigator Records)



The natural beauty of the landscape, skies, flora, and fauna of Kitty Macfarlane's home county of Somerset, England, is the inspiration for much of this impressive debut album.

Her writing is startlingly poetic and deeply evocative of her subject matter due to her talent for vivid and descriptive imagery.

Anyone who has ever witnessed the million-strong flocking of starlings in a murmuration will immediately find resonance in *Starling Song*. The gorgeous title track pays tribute to Luke Howard, a 19th century amateur meteorologist who developed a nomenclature system for clouds and "gave a name to something fleeting". *Glass Eel* both refers to the life cycle of migratory eels and contemplates the history of human migration and the folly of borders, ending with the telling couplet, "Yet here we are in our vice and our vanity/Mindless of the irony/ That while patient science adds fact to fact/Hasty man draws lines on maps".

The production is deft and completely in harmony with the song concepts—hats off to producers Sam Kelly and Jacob Stoney for a

fine job.

It is perhaps Macfarlane's voice that ices this particularly nourishing cake—it is a thing of strength and beauty, reminiscent in places of greats such as Sandy Denny and Kate Rusby, but retaining a distinctive quality that renders it quite unique.

Namer of Clouds is a delightful debut in which to immerse yourself; an unmissable opportunity to get lost in words and music.

— By Tim Readman

El Coyote

El Coyote (Independent)



El Coyote dub themselves "a Montreal-based alt-country-folk, Nashville-influ-

enced Canadiana band whose members hail from the Okanagan Valley, Alberta, Ottawa Valley, Moncton, Antigonish, and Cheticamp."

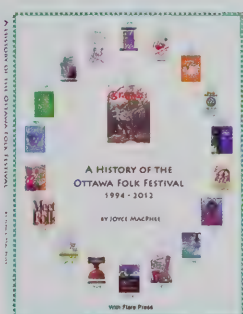
Each member has her or his own ongoing musical career but got together to play the folk and bluegrass songs they grew up on to get through a tough winter. The richness of each member's experience shows through in the musicianship and cohesiveness of this collection of original songs.

The light touch of Joe Grass (Patrick Watson) on pedal steel and Dobro highlights delicate, beautiful harmonies of Angela Desveaux (Yonder Hill), Katie Moore (Socalled, Yonder Hill), and Michelle Tompkins (Sin & Swoon). Guitarist Mike O'Brien and bass player Andrew Horton round out the sound.

El Coyote touches on lonely honky tonk, ageless traditional-sounding ballads, and catchy alt-country tunes that all come together through the harmonies and songwriting of the three women. This album has a timeless, classic quality borne of the experience of all its parts.

Hopefully, this highly listenable "side project" continues to bear fruit.

— By Tanya Corbin



A History of the Ottawa Folk Festival (1994-2012)

by Joyce MacPhee

ISBN: 978-0-9959213-1-3

156 pages; 8 1/2 x 11";
softcover, perfect bound
300 images
18 illustrations

Separate Index:

ISBN: 978-0-9959213-3-7

Available through: OttawaFolkHistory.org
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À la rencontre de Joe Nolan

Les chansons tristes rendent Joe Nolan heureux.

Cela ne devrait pas étonner ceux qui connaissent ses premiers albums, *Goodbye Cinderella* et *Tornado* (2014), mais son goût pour le mélancolique est définitivement évident sur son dernier album, *Cry Baby*.

« Je savais que ce serait le titre avant même de commencer à enregistrer, » admet l'auteur-compositeur-interprète alors qu'il s'était arrêté sur le chemin qui le mènerait à son spectacle à Banff au milieu d'une tempête de neige. « Je crois que je me suis un peu inspiré de l'album *Heartbreaker*, de Ryan Adams. J'adore cet album et j'aime particulièrement l'énergie qui s'en dégage. On sent la vulnérabilité. Avec un nom comme *Cry Baby*, on a l'impression que ça va être l'album le plus déprimant jamais conçu, mais ce n'est pas le cas. »

Il est vrai qu'on peut ressentir toutes les émotions de *Cry Baby*, même si le penchant de Nolan pour les réflexions sombres prend beaucoup de place sur des titres comme *Dead Ends and Damaged Hearts* et *Ode to Sturgeon County*, qui comporte un arrangement de cordes lumineux par le grand feu Tommy Banks en personne. Enregistré et sorti quatre ans après *Tornado*, son premier album chez Six Shooter Records, *Cry Baby* ressemble à une renaissance pour l'artiste edmontonien, qu'on avait perdu de vue après plusieurs années de couverture médiatique.

« Je suis retourné voir mon ancien agent il y a quelques années à Nashville et il s'est exclamé : "Mais qu'est-il donc arrivé à Joe Nolan?" Il n'avait pas entendu parler de moi depuis deux ou trois ans et se demandait ce qui se passait. »

Nolan est peut-être disparu de la sphère publique, mais cela ne l'a pas empêché de continuer de travailler. Il a continué d'écrire les chansons de son prochain album, a fait quelques enregistrements avec des gens comme Hawksley Workman et a réfléchi à ce qu'il aimait du fait d'être avec une maison de disque et à ce qu'il n'aimait pas. Ensuite, il s'est assis avec le producteur Scott Franchuk (CorbLund & the Hurtin' Albertans) et a commencé l'enregistrement de l'album sans direction extérieure.

« Franchuk était la personne parfaite pour ce travail. Il m'a permis d'expérimenter et m'a aidé à réaliser la vision que j'avais. Ses conseils étaient pleins de délicatesse et il m'a donné beaucoup de marge de manœuvre pour diriger le tout. C'était vraiment spécial. »

Ce qui est aussi très spécial pour Nolan, c'est le fait d'avoir finalement mis *Cry Baby* au monde, considérant que cela lui a pris la moitié d'une décennie.

« J'ai senti que j'ai évolué énormément au niveau personnel et musical au cours des cinq dernières années, mais ça m'a également semblé être ma période la plus stagnante. J'ai passé beaucoup de temps à attendre que l'on m'aide avant de finalement prendre le volant et m'en occuper moi-même. J'aurais aimé que quelqu'un martèle dans mon esprit, quand j'avais 21 ans, qu'il est d'une importance capitale de s'occuper de ses propres affaires et de ne pas dépendre des autres pour réaliser ses projets. »

Nolan a été sur la route pour promouvoir *Cry Baby* et a donné des spectacles solo dans certaines villes, et avec des groupes dans d'autres. Il a signé avec Mongrel Music aux États-Unis et a esquissé un plan de tournée outre-mer pour l'année prochaine. Auteur constant, il a l'intention de s'assurer qu'il n'y aura plus jamais d'interruption de cinq ans entre ses albums.

« J'ai passé quelques années à essayer de satisfaire les autres, mais je ne veux plus faire cela, » soupire-t-il. « Je commence à peine à me sentir moi-même à nouveau. »

– Par Tom Murray

– Traduit par Véronique G.-Allard





Rachel Aucoin & Sabin Jaques

Les airs de l'accordéoniste québécois réputé Philippe Bruneau nous sont révélés de manière exquise.

Par Marc Bolduc

Ce commentaire d'ouverture du livret accompagnant le CD consacré à l'œuvre de Philippe Bruneau, résume parfaitement, à lui seul, l'essence du projet créé par le duo de musiciens formé par Rachel Aucoin et Sabin Jaques. Cet album, à travers sa trame toute en nuances, présente une succession de grandes rencontres et de destins croisés, sensible à l'héritage du compositeur, mais aussi, colorée par la créativité des interprètes.

Si l'album peut tirer son origine d'une proposition de concert autour de l'œuvre de Philippe Bruneau pour le Festival La Grande Rencontre (Montréal), il semble bien qu'il s'agisse davantage d'un aboutissement logique au parcours communs des deux artistes derrière ce projet. Plus familière avec la culture traditionnelle du Nouveau-Brunswick ou de Chéticamp (Cap-Breton), Rachel Aucoin avait découvert le répertoire de Philippe Bruneau lors de la diffusion radiophonique d'un concert-hommage réalisé dans le cadre de la Grande Rencontre 1997, retransmission

au cours de laquelle elle avait pu entendre un certain Sabin Jacques... accompagné au piano de Dorothée Hogan! Sabin, de son côté, avait fait la rencontre marquante du compositeur en 1984, lors d'un concert à Pointe-au-Père, admiratif depuis de la sensibilité et la fougue affichée par l'artiste. Partenaires artistiques et dans la vie depuis 1999, leurs cheminements musicaux respectifs, les amenant à travailler ensemble dans différents projets, que ce soit au sein de groupes (Domino, Raz-de-Marée, etc.), dans l'enseignement de la musique traditionnelle dans des camps musicaux (De souche à oreille et autres) ou en étant appelés à présenter des concerts, soit dans le cadre du Carrefour mondial de l'accordéon (Montmagny) ou dans un contexte plus intimiste des concerts-maison. À chaque fois, le répertoire du grand compositeur y était présent. Rachel Aucoin résume le tout en disant : «Il me semble que depuis notre rencontre en 1999, Sabin et moi préparions cet album, implicitement. La vie nous a amené dans toutes sortes de directions, musicales et extra-musicales [...] Tout ce temps-là, comme trame de fond, il y avait toujours le potentiel de jouer, à deux. [...] Inévitablement, un très grand pourcentage de pièces qui nous interpellaient tournaient autour des œuvres de Bruneau. Je pense que c'est rattaché à la flamme qui nous a les deux soudés à cette musique.» L'opportunité d'un concert-hommage aller donner l'élan nécessaire pour donner projet initial une plus grande envergure, le rendre pérenne, voire

laisser une marque dans le temps.

D'entrée de jeu, s'attaquer au répertoire de Philippe Bruneau ne s'avère pas mince tâche, tant l'héritage de ce dernier est célébré, autant pour son génie de compositeur que pour sa façon bien personnelle de concevoir et d'interpréter le répertoire traditionnel québécois. Après tout, ce géant de l'accordéon diatonique québécois, a légué au cours de sa vie plus de cent cinquante pièces de son crû, toutes avec une grande variété mélodique et dont certaines présentent de grands défis d'interprétation.

C'est en procédant à la sélection des pièces, deux évidences sont apparues: il y avait, d'un côté les pièces composées, arrangées et enregistrées par le duo originel de Philippe Bruneau et Dorothée Hogan et les autres, moins connues du public, enregistrées de manière informelle, sur des cassettes et distribuées au gré du compositeur à ses amis, répartis un peu partout dans le monde.

Dans la première catégorie (Hommage à Alfred Montmarquette, Un Canadien errant, Hommage à Dorothée, Hommage à John Kimmel et Hommage aux musiciens traditionnels), il apparaissait difficile de s'éloigner de l'interprétation originale, malgré le potentiel créatif du duo Aucoin-Jacques. «Au fil du temps, j'ai développé mon propre langage d'accompagnatrice en musique traditionnelle qui me permet aujourd'hui d'imaginer des couleurs et des ambiances qui auraient le potentiel d'amener une mélodie ailleurs. Pourtant, rien n'y fait; toutes

les pièces qui avaient auparavant été fixées par Bruneau et Hogan sont comme devenues des classiques, intouchables, en quelque sorte», de dire Rachel Aucoin. De plus, la rencontre de ces deux artistes [Bruneau et Hogan] a permis, selon Sabin Jacques «de sortir le folklore de la cuisine pour l'amener en salle de concert [...] d'ouvrir la voie à une musique d'écoute, qui vaut la peine d'être entendu pour ce qu'elle est». Pour ces pièces, donc, on a donc choisi de respecter religieusement la proposition du compositeur.

Dans la seconde catégorie, les pièces brutes de Bruneau (mélodies accompagnées au piano par l'artiste) laissent place à l'interprétation artistique. Pour Sabin Jacques, Philippe Bruneau composait ses pièces «comme des histoires, avec un début, un milieu et une fin». Il faut donc être en mesure, pour jouer du Bruneau tout en étant créatif, de raconter quelque

chose, en musique, un peu à l'image du maître. Rachel ajoute : «La musique, dans la forme où on l'aborde, se rapproche le plus possible d'une relation humaine. Les gens se parlent ou s'écotent plus ou moins [...]. Plus la connexion est fluide et palpable, plus la musique porte son message. [...] Dans le cas de Sabin et moi, j'ai toujours trouvé ce contact facile et naturel. Comme si c'était notre langue maternelle.» À cet égard, on peut affirmer sans ambages que le défi a été relevé avec brio, tant la proposition du duo s'avère riche.

Grandes rencontres, au-delà des croisements et jonctions artistiques à travers le temps le temps et les époques, s'avère une rencontre magistrale entre deux musiciens au talent exceptionnel. Même si les mélodies mettent en valeur l'accordéon, le piano n'est jamais laissé pour compte ni ne sert de faire-valoir. L'album propose une conversation entre deux in-

struments, ponctuée de dialogues dans lesquels les échanges s'effectuent dans l'écoute et le respect de l'autre. La complicité implicite entre les deux interprètes est palpable, il s'en dégage un son empreint de chaleur, oscillant entre la douceur et la force, au grand ravissement des auditeurs.

En conclusion, l'album *Grandes rencontres* s'avère un condensé de rencontres musicales qui ont marqué l'histoire de la musique traditionnelle québécoise. D'abord celle de Philippe Bruneau et de Dorothée Hogan, puis leur rencontre musicale, presque quatre décennies plus tard avec le duo incarné par Rachel Aucoin et Sabin Jacques. De surcroît, il s'agit d'une rencontre de deux instruments, mais aussi de deux univers musicaux (classique et traditionnel), et surtout, la rencontre entre deux exquis interprètes.

Critiques



El Coyote

El Coyote (Indépendant)

El coyote se décrivent eux-mêmes comme un «groupe montréalais

alt-country-folk de culture canadienne influencé par Nashville et dont les membres proviennent de la vallée de l'Okanagan, de l'Alberta, de la vallée de l'Outaouais, de Moncton, d'Antigonish et de Chéticamp.»

Chaque membre a sa propre carrière musicale, mais ils et elles se réunissent pour jouer les chansons folk et bluegrass qui les ont accompagnés et aidés à passer au travers des durs hivers de leur jeunesse. La grande expérience de chaque membre se reflète dans la maestria et la cohésion de cette collection de chansons originales.

La touche légère de Joe Grass (Patrick Watson) à la guitare à pédale et à la guitare Dobro met en valeur les harmonies agréables et délicates d'Angela Desveaux (Yonder Hill), de Katie Moore (Socalled, Yonder Hill) et de Michelle Tompkins (Sin & Swoon). Le guitariste Mike O'Brien et le bassiste Andrew Horton ajoutent la touche finale à l'ensemble.

El Coyote tâte du honky tonk, des balades intemporelles au son traditionnel et des airs entraînants d'alt-country rassemblés par les harmonies et le travail d'écriture des

trois femmes. On ressent l'expérience des créateurs derrière cet album aux qualités intemporelles et classiques.

Espérons que ce «projet secondaire» très agréable à écouter continue de porter ses fruits.

- Par Tanya Corbin
- Traduit par Véronique G.-Allard



Vishtèn

Horizons (Indépendant)

La musique traditionnelle et la culture acadienne de l'Est canadien représentent

un tour de force et une contribution de longue date au patrimoine durable de la musique traditionnelle. Vishtèn, un trio acadien-français, est un parfait exemple de culture francophone par son mélange de narration et d'instrumentation traditionnelle virtuose à l'ambiance progressive témoignant de l'intelligence de sa composition.

Horizons, le sixième album studio de Vishtèn, est fermement enraciné dans le son et la culture des provinces maritimes francophones du Canada. Les pistes instrumentales comme *Les clefs de la prison* montrent l'originalité et les aptitudes en composition des sœurs Emmanuelle et Pastelle Leblanc et du multi-instrumentaliste Pascal Miousse, par un jeu de violon de maître se superposant à la magnifique mélodie de la flûte.

Par son mélange de pièces traditionnelles modernes et de compositions techniques originales, *Horizons* explore les fondations

multiculturelles de la musique traditionnelle canadienne et présente une maîtrise et un jeu de violon exceptionnels se démarquant du travail des autres musiciens traditionnels contemporains.

La beauté de l'harmonisation céleste des voix d'Emmanuelle et de Pastelle est telle qu'il n'est pas nécessaire de comprendre la langue pour apprécier les paysages sonores superposés et les mélodies magnifiques des onze pistes de l'album.

Horizons est un hommage aérien et touchant aux histoires traditionnelles acadiennes, celtiques, et canadiennes. L'album combine une maîtrise de la musique traditionnelle et une perspective culturelle unique qui nous aideront à explorer la riche histoire musicale du Canada, la culture contemporaine et les horizons possibles qui s'ouvrent devant nous.

- Par Levi Gogerla
- Traduit par Véronique G.-Allard





Tim Readman

Tim Readman grows concerned that the sanctity of 'listening venues' appears under threat from boors with no concept of acceptable etiquette.

In her book *Talk to the Hand: The Utter Bloody Rudeness of the World Today*, Lynne Truss poses the pertinent question: how can we deal with the boorish behaviour of others?

Recently, I find myself indulging in fantasies about being some kind of superhero vigilante, a sort of caped crusader charged with the task of enforcing politeness and consideration for others. I can't blame you for thinking I've lost the plot. I probably have but if so, I lay the blame at the door of people who talk loudly on mobile phones in public places; those who surf the Internet when they are supposed to be having a conversation; cold callers invading the privacy of the home; and sales clerks to whom ignoring has become a fine art.

That's not to mention drivers who, on seeing a yellow light, drive faster; the narcissistic hordes who halt the progress of everybody else in order to get that selfie; the legions of talkers

and kickers of seats in the cinema; and the ineffectual parents who seem to be pathologically incapable of controlling their children in potentially dangerous environments ("Yes, of course you can play with that thermonuclear reactor, Tommy").

To paraphrase Charlotte Brontë, "The thought comes to me: am I to spend all the best part of my life in this wretched bondage, forcibly suppressing my rage at the rudeness, the obliviousness, and the hyperbolic and most asinine stupidity of these fat-headed oafs?"

And there's the rub—I start off indignant at the behaviour of others and end up worse than them! As Judith Martin points out in her renowned etiquette guides, calling people out on their rude behaviour is, in itself, rude.

So what can we do? I use the term 'we' on the assumption that you are still with me and haven't hurled down your copy of *Penguin Eggs* whilst crying, "What a load of old tosh and what's this got to do with folk music?"

Well, the truth is that I am increasingly witnessing a worrying trend towards audience misbehaviour at the clubs, house concerts, festivals, and other folk music venues I frequent.

It wasn't like that in my day! When I started listening to folk music in the confines of a rough little village pub in County Durham, England, the rules for attending their weekly folk club were clear, strict, and rigidly enforced:

1. No talking, eating crisps, or making any kind of sound during the performance.
2. Wait until the end of a song before you leave the room for any purpose, including using the washroom.
3. Wait until the end of a song before you re-enter the room.
4. Order your drinks, etc. in the breaks or go through to the bar to do your ordering.

There was no need to add anything further regarding taking photos, filming, posting to social media, or texting because phones were still made of moulded plastic (if not Bakelite), weren't portable, and had rotary dials.

As a result, I was able to enter a world where total absorption in the performances of such luminaries as Martin Carthy, Vin Garbutt, Bob Fox, and Jez Lowe was the norm. As an audience member and performer, that was a hugely positive influence on my growing love for folk music.

Now, I am not suggesting that there are no longer plenty of venues that provide a pleasant, courteous atmosphere for a listening audience, but I am very concerned, given current trends, that the continued existence and sanctity of the

'listening venue' may be under threat.

This threat largely comes from the breakdown in the distinction between private and public codes of behaviour. The increasing prevalence of mobile electronic devices, that keep us firmly in our own narrow-casting universe, affects our ability to accurately distinguish between personal and public space. Or perhaps we simply forget the Golden Rule upon which all principles of good manners are founded.

So what shall we do when our fellow patrons are ruining our—and potentially the artist's—enjoyment of a folk music performance? Should we shut up and suffer or speak up and be damned?

As has often been observed in the annals of etiquette, people who concern themselves at length with the behaviour of others are often no better than they ought to be themselves. So one answer is not to go out anymore—a rather drastic solution echoed in the subtitle to the aforementioned Ms. Truss's treatise expressed thusly: *Six Good Reasons to Stay Home and Bolt the Door*. That wouldn't help anyone.

I have tried two different approaches. One is to sit quietly and patiently in the hope that the racket being made a few seats along from me will eventually dissipate, after which I can return to my enjoyment of the show. The trouble is that when it doesn't I find myself seething and unable to focus on the performance at all.

The other one is to speak up. The results of this method can only be described as mixed. Sometimes people apologize and stop looking at their phone/talking/rattling their candy bag/allowing their child to dismantle the PA system ("Yes, that's what makes it go louder, Tommy"). At other times, it has rapidly escalated into an argument of the "who do you think you are/don't tell me what to do/you are a stuck-up git" variety.

It is with this in mind that I make my appeal to all organizers, artistic directors, managers, and programmers of folk music live events to make explicit your expectations of the audience, through announcements at every concert, inclusion of a short paragraph in programs, and other literature and signage posted at the venue.

As I found out in the Dun Cow Inn long ago, once people understand what is expected of them and why, they will happily comply in the vast majority of cases—and that can only be a good thing for everybody.

Although, it has to be said, the fact that the MC was a six-foot-four East Durham coal miner helped a bit as well!

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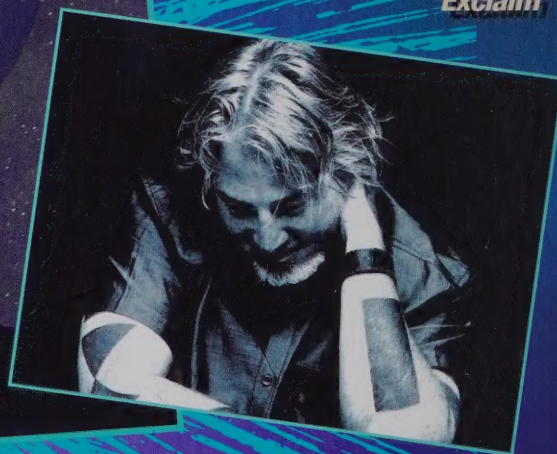
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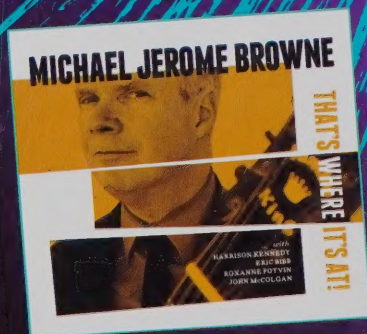
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